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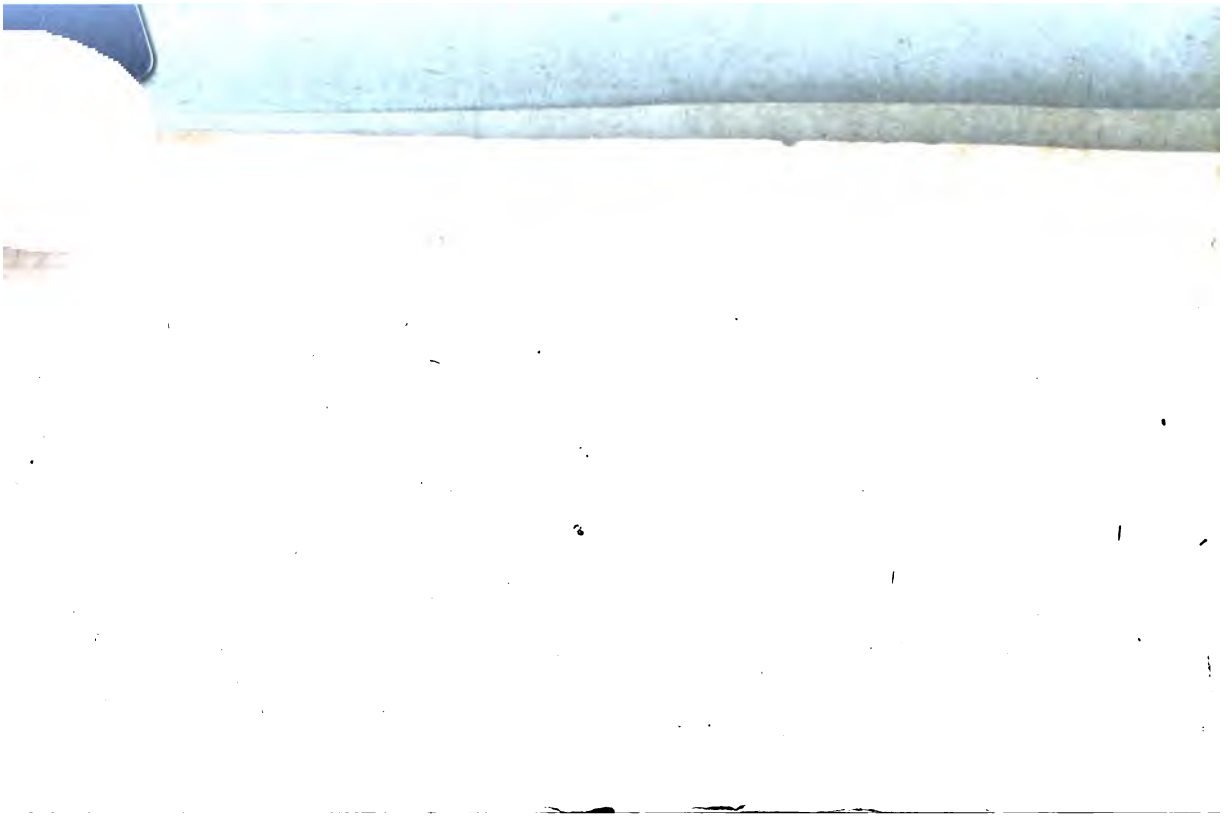

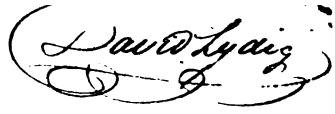

DRAMATIC MISCELLANIES:

CONSISTING OF

CRITICAL OBSERVATIONS

ON SEVERAL

PLAYS OF SHAKSPEARE:

WITH A

REVIEW OF HIS PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS, AND THOSE OF VARIOUS EMINENT WRITERS,

AS REPRESENTED

BY MR. GARRICK,

AND OTHER CELEBRATED COMEDIANS.

WITH

ANECDOTES OF DRAMATIC POETS, ACTORS, &c.

BY THOMAS DAVIES,

AUTHOR OF MEMOIRS OF THE LIFE OF

DAVID GARRICK, ESQ.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

DUBLIN:

PRINTED FOR S. PRICE, H. WHITESTONE, W. WILSON, R. MONCRIEFFE, L. WHITE, T. WALKER, R. MARCHBANK, P. BYRNE, R. BURTON, J. CASH, W. SLEATER.

M,DCC,LXXXIV.

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DRAMATIC MISCELLANIES.

Hamlet.

CHAPTER XXXV.

Obligations of the public to Mr. Stephens and Mr. Malone.—The time, when Hamlet was firſt acted, not certainly authenticated.—Shakſpeare's frequent additions to thoſe plays he valued.—Hamlet, firſt play of Shakſpeare acted at the duke's theatre.—Popularity of Hamlet.—Franciſco and Bohemia.—Voltaire's diſingenuity.—Rivals of the watch.—*The word* ſtomach *explained.*—A little more than kin, and leſs than kind.—Too much i'th' ſun.—*A common thought nobly expreſſed.—Dr. Johnſon ſuppoſed to be miſtaken.—Parallel paſſage, in the Supplicants of Æſchylus, to the advice of Laertes.—Kings of Denmark lovers of Rheniſh.—Their intoxication.—Maſque of the Queen of Sheba.—A whole Court inebriated.*—Dram of baſe.—*A paſſage rectified with a ſmall alteration.—Reverend Mr. Robertſon.*—Complete ſteel.—Beetles o'er his baſe.—Confin'd to faſt in fires.—*Lucian's Dialogue of Menippus, &c.*—Juice of curſed Hebenon.—*Galen, Dioſcorides, Celſus, &c.*—Diſtracted globe.—*The firſt act of Hamlet unequalled.—Ghoſt of Darius, from Æſchylus.—A good leſſon for princes.—Dr. Potter and Mr. Rumney.—Ghoſt of Laius.—Of Ninus, in Semiramis.*—

Clairon, Le Kin, and the property-man.—Diſcuſſion of the manner of addreſſing the Ghoſt by Hamlet.—Taylor, Sir W. Davenant, Betterton.—Macklin and Henderſon.—Colley Cibber and Mr. Addiſon.—Booth and Wilks.—Booth's ſuperiority in the Ghoſt.

ALL lovers of Shakſpeare are indebted to Mr. Steevens and Mr. Malone, for their diligent reſearches into every thing which related to this great man and his family; and more eſpecially to the immortal part of him, his writings. The chronological ſeries of his plays, with large and inſtructive notes, is a very curious and intereſting compoſition, in which Mr. Malone has endeavoured to authenticate the order and fix the dates of all the plays written by our great poet.

After a moſt ſtrict examination into the time when Hamlet made its firſt appearance, Mr. Malone is obliged to leave that circumſtance rather undetermined, though he has, with ſome degree of probability, placed it to the year 1596. In my opinion, the firſt ſketch of it was brought on the ſtage more early. In all his pieces, for which he entertained a predilection, it is granted he made ſuch additions as he thought would advance the credit of the play, and make it more palatable to an audience; and, as no one of his tragedies by conſent of hiſtory and tradition, was more reliſhed, by the inhabitants of this metropolis, than Hamlet, we have no reaſon to doubt, that he, from time to time, threw in ſuch materials as would improve the original ſtock: ſo that the firſt and laſt Hamlet might be, in ſome reſpect, as diſſimilar, as Pope's Rape of the Lock, with the ſylphs, and the ſame poem without them.

The firſt play of Shakſpeare, acted after the Reſtoration at the duke's theatre, if we may depend on the Narrative of Downs, was Hamlet; the principal character was acted by Betterton, who often exhibited himſelf in this part, at the opening of the theatre, as an infallible lure to draw company. Wilks at Drury-lane, and Ryan at Lincoln's-inn fields, frequently choſe this favourite part to open the winter ſeaſon at theſe rival playhouſes. From the firſt repreſentation of Hamlet, to the preſent day, we may reaſonably conclude, that no dramatic piece whatever has laid hold on the public affection ſo ſtrongly and been acted ſo frequently.

Act I. Scene I.

FRANCISCO.

For this relief much thanks: 'tis bitter cold,
And I am ſick at heart.

The right expreſſion of a ſimple thought is ſometimes of conſiderable and unexpected conſequence to the ſpeaker. Mr. Boheme was about the year 1718, accidently ſeen by Rich, when playing with ſome itinerants at Stratford le Bow, who ſoon diſtinguiſhed him from his companions, and hired him, at a ſmall income, to act at his theatre in Lincoln's-inn fields. I have been told, that this actor was, on his firſt trial, caſt into the trifling part of Franciſco. His unaffected, yet feeling, manner, of pronouncing this ſhort ſpeech, rouſed the auditors to an attention of his merit. His ſalary was immediately increaſed by the manager, and he proved afterwards a great ornament of the ſtage.

IDEM.

Not a mouſe ſtirring.

Voltaire, who, in examining the merit of our author's plays, diſdains the uſe of no unfair method

to depreciate them, has ridiculed this paſſage of Hamlet, as if the mention of a mouſe were beneath the dignity of tragedy. But could there be a properer mode of deſcribing the ſolitarineſs which reigned in the place, than by ſaying that every thing was ſo ſtill, that the ſoft tread of a ſmall reptile had not been heard? The inſignificance of an object does by no means leſſen the general idea. Have not the moſt celebrated antient dramatic writers admitted thoughts as low, and words more groſs and offenſive, into their beſt tragedies? How does the nice ear of a Frenchman reliſh the filthy plaſters and naſty rags which Philoctetes applies to his ſores? Yet Sophocles underſtood nature, and the laws of decorum, I preſume, as perfectly as Voltaire. Tireſias's deſcription, in Antigone, of the ordure and filth of the ill-omened birds who had fed on the carcaſs of Polynices, would raiſe a nauſea in the ſtomach of a delicate French critic! Men of ſolid judgment and true taſte deſpiſe ſuch refinement.

BERNARDO.

If you do meet Horatio and Marcellus,
The *rivals* of my watch———

Dr. Warburton will have *rivals* to mean *partners*. Blunt derives the word from *rivus*, or *rivilus*, or from *men fetching water from a neighbouring river, or rivulet*. Hanmer ſays, *rivals* are thoſe men who watch upon an adjoining ground: by this interpretation, they, who are to ſucceed Bernardo, muſt have indeed gone through very hard ſervice, as they were called from one act of duty to another. But, without a learned explanation, it is plain, by *rivals*, that Shakſpeare means, thoſe men who were appointed next to relieve ſoldiers on the watch.

watch. They were indeed ſo far *rivals*, as they were ſucceſſors to others, and waiting to occupy their places.

HORATIO.

Some ſtrange eruption to the ſtate.

'Some political diſtemper, which will break out in dangerous conſequences.'

IDEM.

That hath a *ſtomach* in it.

Stomach, ſays Dr. Johnſon, in the times of Shakſpeare, was uſed for *conſtancy* and *reſolution*. The original, *ſtomachus*, has various ſignifications beſides the *ſtomach*. —In Cicero, it means, in one place *choler*; in another, *humour*, or *fancy*. *Ille mihi riſum magis quam ſtomachum. Ludi apparatiſſimi, ſed non tui ſtomachi.* In Shakſpeare, *ſtomach* generally ſtands for exceſſive pride, or inſolence of power. Queen Katharine, ſpeaking of Cardinal Wolſey, 'He was of *an unbounded ſtomach*.' Henry VIII. act IV. I think, in this place, 'hath a *ſtomach* in it' means, 'the buſineſs is of an alarming nature.'

MARCELLUS.

Some ſay, that, ever 'gainſt that ſeaſon comes
In which our Saviour's birth is celebrated,
The bird of dawning ſingeth all night long.
And then, they ſay, no *ſpirit* dare ſtir abroad;
The nights are wholeſome; then no planets ſtrike,
No fairy *takes*, nor witch hath power to charm;
So hallow'd, and ſo gracious, is the time!

Theſe lines, which are omitted in the repreſentation of the play, are remarkably beautiful; they are invigorated by fancy and harmonized by verſification.

'The

The word *ſpirit*, in the 4th line, ſhould be, I think, contracted to *ſprite*, or *ſp'rit*; both are, I believe, familiar to our old dramatiſts.

'No fairy *takes*,' in the 6th line, is explained by Lear's curſe on Goneril, in the ſecond act of that play:

——— ——— Strike her young bones,
Ye *taking* airs, with lameneſs!

Scene II.

The King, Queen, Hamlet, &c.

HAMLET.

A little more than kin, and leſs than kind.

Hanmer ſuppoſes that this might formerly have been a proverbial expreſſion; but vulgar ſayings or proverbs are gathered from ſuch things as frequently happen, and not from circumſtances and events which are unuſual.

The meaning of this line, however variouſly underſtood by different commentators, ſeems to be very obvious.

'As I am the rightful heir to the crown, I am more than your relation; I am your king. As you have deprived me of my birthright, and committed the crime of inceſt with my mother, it is impoſſible I can have any affection or kindneſs for you.'

It ſhould be obſerved, that, whenever Hamlet ſpeaks *of* the King, it is in terms of reproach and of the utmoſt contempt; nor does he ever ſeem to pay him the leaſt reſpect, in his behaviour or addreſs, when he ſpeaks to him.

IDEM.

Not ſo, my lord; I am too much i'th' ſun.

'I am

'I am ſo far from being obſcured with ſhadows, that I am ſcorched with the rays of your ſunſhine.'

QUEEN.

——— ——— All that live muſt die,
Paſſing through nature to eternity.

The thought is common; but the expreſſion is awfully ſtriking and extremely beautiful.

KING.

No jocund health, that Denmark drinks to-day,
But the loud cannon to the clouds ſhall tell.

I cannot think, with Dr. Johnſon, that theſe lines particularly mark the king's fondneſs for drinking. Drunkenneſs was the national vice, as Hamlet himſelf afterwards confeſſes.

This ſeems to have been pointed out, by the author, as the King's firſt appearance in public after his uſurping the crown and marrying his ſiſter; and is therefore celebrated as a gala-day. He therefore ſeizes an opportunity to compliment Hamlet's conceſſion, as he would fain term it, in his own favour, by firing off the cannon to his honour at every toaſt.

IDEM.

——— ——— To poſt
With ſuch *dexterity* to inceſtuous ſheets.

Dexterity for *rapidity*.

IDEM.

Would I had met my deareſt foe, in heaven,
Ere I had ſeen that day, Horatio!

This ſtrongly marks the reſentful, not to ſay implacable diſpoſition, of Hamlet; and is of a piece with

obliged to carry them on their ſhoulders to their beds. Perhaps our author's knowledge of this Bacchanalian bout was one reaſon why he inſiſts ſo much on the drunkenneſs of the royal Dane.

HAMLET.

——— The dram of baſe
Doth all the noble ſubſtance of worth out,
To his own ſcandal.

The admirable reflections of Hamlet, upon national vice and perſonal blemiſh, on account of the length of the play, are entirely curtailed. Our author, as excellent in morals as he was happy in character and paſſion, makes a juſt obſervation on the danger of indulging one favourite paſſion, vice, or folly, which, he ſays, taints the whole man, and tarniſhes all his virtues, however great and eminent. This is, I believe, that plague of the heart which Solomon calls upon his people to pray againſt in his dedication of the temple. The apoſtle James, in his Epiſtle, hath a ſentiment very ſimilar to that of Shakſpeare: *For, whoſoever ſhall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.*

The text, as it ſtands in the quoted paſſage,——

——— That dram of baſe
Doth all the noble ſubſtance of worth out,
To his own ſcandal,——

is given up, by ſome of the commentators, as very difficult and obſcure, notwithſtanding the explanation of Mr. Steevens, it ſtill ſeems harſh, if not unintelligible.

The very trifling alteration, of adding a letter to one word, and the changing two letters for one in another, will, I believe, reſtore to us the original reading.

—— The

——— The dram of baſe
Doth all the noble ſubſtance *oft work* out,
To his own ſcandal.

'As a ſmall quantity of certain medicines, by its potent operation, deprives the body of its ſtrength and firmneſs, ſo this alloy of vice, this *dram of baſe*, works out, or renders uſeleſs, all the noble qualities of the mind.'

When I read this propoſed emendation to the reverend and learned Mr. Robertſon, he not only concurred with me, but aſſured me he had himſelf made the ſame amendment.

IDEM.

That thou, dead corſe, again in complete ſteel—

Mr. Steevens, from Olaus Wormius, proves it to be a cuſtom of the Daniſh kings to be buried in their armour. Seward, Earl of Northumberland, who lived in the days of Edward the Confeſſor, was, by his deſire, buried armed at all points. But, what is more ſtrange, Fuller, in his Worthies, relates, that one of our old ſavage warriors would go to bed dreſſed in his armour, to his new-married bride.

HORATIO.

——— Summit of the cliff,
That *beetles* o'er his baſe into the ſea.

If I underſtand the meaning of the word *beetle*, in this place, it looks *frowningly*, or *dreadfully*, on the ocean.—The ſame thought occurs, with great force, in Southern's Oroonoko, act V.

———Oh! for a whirlwind's wing
To hurry us to yonder cliff, that frowns
Upon the flood.

HORATIO.

HORATIO.

Heaven will *direct* it.

Dr. Farmer thinks the author might have written *detect* it. But the preſent reading includes that ſenſe, and ſomething more: 'Heaven will diſcover what is amiſs, and point out the means of correction.'

GHOST.

Confin'd to *faſt in fires*.

By *faſting in fires*, we are to underſtand the puniſhment of purgatory, or the purification of the ſoul by fire. I have ſomewhere read, that it was formerly an uſual threat, of the Roman Catholic prieſts to their penitents, that, if they did not faſt here, they muſt faſt in a worſe place.—The word *faſt* ſtands here, by metonymy, for *puniſhed*.

IDEM.

——————— I am forbid
To tell the ſecrets of my priſon-houſe, &c.
But this eternal blazon muſt not be
To ears of fleſh and blood.

In Lucian's Dialogue of Menippus and Philonides, there is a ſentiment which ſo ſtrongly reſembles this caution of the Ghoſt, that I am induced to believe our Shakſpeare had read the tranſlation, which was publiſhed, in Engliſh verſe and Latin proſe, about the beginning of Queen Elizabeth's reign.

Philonides aſks Menippus to diſcover to him the laws and decrees of the infernal judges. Menippus informs him, that it is not lawful for him to lay open, in the upper world, what he had heard in the regions below, nor to divulge the infernal ſecrets, leſt Rhadamanthus ſhould puniſh him for it.

IDEM.

IDEM.

With juice of curſed *hebenon* in a vial.

Dr. Gray is of opinion, that the author, or his tranſcriber, by a metatheſis, put *hebenon* for *henebon*, which is *henbane*. I believe it would puzzle the moſt curious ſearcher to find the word *henebon* in any of our botanical books; and I could wiſh the word *henbane* were ſubſtituted for *hebenon*, at leaſt upon the ſtage. The doctor has quoted Galen, Dioſcorides, and Wepfer, to prove its narcotic qualities. The two laſt aſcribe to it the power of producing a delirium. But the doctor did not know, perhaps, that Hippocrates and Celſus admitted the *henbane* into their preſcriptions for certain diſorders, and eſpecially for melancholy. Scribonius Largus preſcribes it, in ſome caſes, under the name of *altericus*.

IDEM.

So luſt, though to a radiant angel link'd,
Will ſate itſelf in a celeſtial bed,
And prey on garbage.

Thus Angelo, in Meaſure for Meaſure,

——— It is I,
Who, lying by a violet in the ſun,
Do as the carrion does, not as the flower,
Corrupt with virtuous ſeaſon.

HAMLET.

In this diſtracted globe.

Shakſpeare frequently compares the body of man to the world, or to a kingdom. As, in King John, act IV. —

Nay, in the body of this fleſhly land,
This kingdom, this confine of blood and breath—

And in Julius Cæſar, act II.—

——— The ſtate of man,
Like to a little kingdom, ſuffers then
The nature of an inſurrection.

IDEM.

IDEM.

Swear upon my ſword.

There are ſo many valuable notes, on this paſſage, in the laſt edition of Johnſon and Steevens, 1778, that I ſhall only obſerve, it was a practice in chivalry for knights to ſwear on their ſword.

IDEM.

There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in your philoſophy.

The poet by this obſervation, intended to humble the preſumption and daring pride of certain philoſophers, who, by arrogantly attributing known effects to cauſes which no human wiſdom can aſcertain, have diſgraced their writings and miſled their readers.

This act of Hamlet is ſingularly excellent. For richneſs of matter, dignity of action, and variety of character, it may challenge a preference to the firſt act of any tragedy, ancient or modern.—When the Ghoſt is firſt announced by the centinels, our expectation is mightily raiſed; his appearance ſtrikes with awe. The pathetic addreſs of Horatio fixes attention, and raiſes the admiration of the ſpectators. But the viſion is judiciouſly prevented from anſwering Horatio's queſtions; for that would have leſſened the curioſity, as well as the terror, ariſing from the interview between the Ghoſt and Hamlet; which, for boldneſs of invention, ſtrength of imagery, energy of expreſſion, and glow of paſſion, exceeds any thing which can be compared with it.

In the antient Greek drama, the ghoſt of Darius, in the Perſæ of Æſchylus, is, I ſuppoſe, the only viſion of the Greek drama which can be brought in competition with that of Hamlet. Darius comes not a volunteer from the dead, but is raiſed to the upper-

per world [illegible]
[illegible]ain an [illegible]
[illegible] held in ever[illegible]
[illegible]ly engage [illegible]

He in [illegible]
W[illegible]
Go[illegible]
In [illegible]

Instead of [illegible]
[illegible]s shade. [illegible]
[illegible]easons w[illegible]
[illegible]g acquaint[illegible] w
which attend[illegible]
Xerxes, [illegible]
Atossa, and [illegible]
[illegible]ifes them [illegible]
[illegible] end [illegible]
[illegible] tell [illegible]
peaceful [illegible]
circumstan[illegible]
host in Greece

At the [illegible]
exaltation [illegible]
of Dar[illegible]
scene, [illegible]
should [illegible]
We are
favour [illegible]
pe[illegible]
ca[illegible]

father's ſhade, is a ſubject leſs intereſting, to call forth the attention and exerciſe the genius of the moſt eminent painter.

In the Oedipus of Dryden and Lee, the ghoſt of Laius is raiſed from hell by an incantation, part of which is borrowed from Macbeth. The occaſion is important; and the compoſition of the whole, however inferior it is to Shakſpeare, is poetical and animated.

I am at a loſs to know whether the French ſtage would have been decorated with a ghoſt, had not Voltaire been ſtruck with that of Hamlet. Thence he warmed his Semiramis with that fire which he ſtole from the man, whom he admires, envies, vilifies, and groſsly miſrepreſents.

As the ghoſt of Darius made his appearance before the whole Perſian court, ſo does that of Ninus in the full preſence of Semiramis and the court of Babylon, which he ſtrikes with terror and amazement. He is uſhered in with loud claps of thunder and flaſhes of lightning. But, although the author prepared the audience for ſomething ſingularly awful and terrifying, yet, after all, Ninus makes but a ſmall figure. That little which he ſpeaks is wrapped up in oracular obſcurity; and the play, though certainly marked with genius, is ſo fabulous in its plot, ſo perplexed in its conduct, and ſo improbable in its cataſtrophe, that it will require no ghoſt from the dead to propheſy it will not very long be a favourite drama of the French ſtage. The author was highly indebted to the action of La Clairon and Le Kin: the diſtraction which the latter expreſſed, when riſing from the tomb of Ninus, after killing his mother, was attended with perpetual ſhouts of applauſe.

At the laſt rehearſal of Semiramis, which, in France,

France, is equal to a firſt repreſentation, a whimſical converſation paſſed between the property-man, who preſided over the thunder and lightning, and Madame La Clairon. As the fellow was preparing his bolts and flaſhes, he called out to the lady, 'Pray, madam, will you have your thunder long or ſhort?' She replied, *As long as Madame Dumeſnil's.* This excited a laughter which diſturbed the theatrical proceſs; but the French are quickly moved to riſibility.

Hamlet's addreſs to the ghoſt, in this act, is juſtly eſteemed one of thoſe ſituations in which the actor of merit may diſplay, to the full, his greateſt abilities.—Taylor was the original performer of Hamlet; and his excellencies, in that character, were ſo remarkable, that, from the remembrance of them, Sir William Davenant taught Betterton a leſſon which gained him univerſal and laſting reputation. His manner of addreſs to the viſion is recorded, by Cibber, in language ſo lively and terms ſo appoſite, that the reader will not be diſpleaſed to ſee them quoted here.

'He opened the ſcene with a pauſe of mute amazement; then, riſing ſlowly to a ſolemn, trembling, voice, he made the Ghoſt equally terrible to the ſpectator and himſelf; and, in the deſcriptive part of the natural emotions which the ghaſtly viſion gave him, the boldneſs of his expoſtulation was ſtill governed by decency; manly, but not braving; his his voice never riſing to that ſeeming outrage or wild defiance of what he naturally revered.' And in this manner our late admirable Roſcius addreſſed the viſion.

Mr. Macklin, whoſe judgment merits the utmoſt deference, differs in his opinion, reſpecting the behaviour of Hamlet to the Ghoſt, from Betterton and

and Garrick. With pleaſure I have heard him recite the ſpeech of Hamlet to the Ghoſt, which he did with much force and energy. After the ſhort ejaculation of 'Angels and miniſters of grace, defend us!' he endeavoured to conquer that fear and terror into which he was naturally thrown by the firſt ſight of the viſion, and uttered the remainder of the addreſs calmly, but reſpectfully, and with a firm tone of voice, as from one who had ſubdued his timidity and apprehenſion. Mr. Henderſon, a moſt judicious actor and accurate ſpeaker, ſeems to have embraced a method not unlike that of Mr. Macklin.

How far tradition may be permitted to govern, in this queſtion, I will not ſay: but Downs, the ſtage-hiſtorian, in his peculiar phraſe, informs us, 'That Mr. Betterton took every particle of Hamlet from Sir William Davenant, who had ſeen Mr. Taylor, who was taught by Mr. Shakſpeare himſelf.'

If we give credit to Downs, we muſt grant that the author was the beſt interpreter of his own meaning. Nor can I, indeed, conceive, that any ſudden reſolution, on the appearance of ſo queſtionable a ſhape as the viſion of a dead father, can ſo far ſupport a ſon as to be free from terror and affright. It is not in nature to aſſume ſuch courage as will withſtand a ſight ſo awful and tremendous.

Towards the cloſe of Hamlet's ſpeech, the words themſelves are ſtrongly expreſſive of the uncommon impreſſion ſtill remaining on his mind:

> ——————— And we, fools of nature,
> So horridly to ſhake our diſpoſition
> With thoughts beyond the reaches of our ſouls.

Colley Cibber, when in company with Mr. Addiſon at the tragedy of Hamlet, tells us, that they were

were both ſurprized at the vociferous manner in which Wilks ſpoke to the Ghoſt. This was greatly cenſured by them both, and with juſtice; for awe and terror will never excite a loud and intemperate exertion of the voice.

Wilks was ſo far miſtaken, in this treatment of Hamlet's Ghoſt, that Booth, one day at rehearſal, reproached him for it. 'I thought,' ſaid he, 'Bob, that laſt night you wanted to play at fifty-cuffs with me: you bullied that which you ought to have revered. When I acted the Ghoſt with Betterton, inſtead of my awing him, he terrified me. But divinity hung round that man!' To this rebuke, Wilks, with his uſual modeſty, replied, ——'Mr. Betterton and Mr. Booth could always act as they pleaſed: he, for his part, muſt do as well as he could.'

The Ghoſt, though not meanly repreſented ſince the time of Booth, has never been equal to the action of that comedian. His ſlow, ſolemn, and under tone of voice, his noiſeleſs tread, as if he had been compoſed of air, and his whole deportment, inſpired the audience with that feeling which is excited by awful aſtoniſhment! The impreſſion of his appearance in this part was ſo powerful, upon a conſtant frequenter of the theatres for near ſixty years, that he aſſured me, when, long after Booth's death, he was preſent at the tragedy of Hamlet, as ſoon as the name of the Ghoſt was announced on the ſtage, he felt a kind of awe and terror, 'of which,' ſaid he, 'I was ſoon cured by his appearance.' Quin, who loved and admired Booth, ſome years before he left the ſtage, to oblige his old friend, Ryan, acted the Ghoſt with the approbation of the public, and as near to the manner of his old maſter as he poſſibly could.

Let

Let me add here, that the ſituation of Æneas, when he is ſurprized by the viſion of his wife Creüſa, is ſimilar to that of Hamlet, and is ſtrongly pictured by the exclamation of———

Obſtupui, ſteterunt que comæ, et vox faucibus hæſit!

Theſe words are ſo expreſſive of extreme terror of mind, that no fortitude could enable any man to recover from it by calm effort of deliberation. The ſenſes are too much diſturbed to be brought into their proper tone by any thing but time.

CHAP. XXXVI.

Polonius and Reynolds.—Fencing.—*Some paſſages explained.*—*Meaning of* quoting.—*Polonius's character;—diſcuſſed at large.*—*Polonius always acted by low comedians.*—*Garrick's miſtake.*—*Woodward's failure.*—*Hamlet's reception of his ſchoolfellows.*—*A King's part in a play, not always deſirable to the actor.*—*Reproach of Demoſthenes to Æſchines.*—*Garrick and Barry.*—Lungs tickled with a ſere.—*Players inhibition.*—*Crying out on the queſtion.*—*Hercules and his load.*—Hawk from a handſaw.—*Boys acting of female parts.*—Altitude of a chioppine.—*What a chioppine is.*—*Clergy and players at variance.*—*Remarkable ſtory to the honour of a comedian.*—Viſage warm'd.—*Baron and Betterton.*—*Remarkable ſtory of guilt acknowledged by a ſcene of a play.*—*Dr. Barrowby and a London apprentice.*—Tent him to the quick.—*Murder of Mr. Derby, by Fiſher.*—*Behaviour of Fiſher at the play of Hamlet.*—*Ben Jonſon's quarrel with the players.*—*Wilks.*—*His defect in utterance.*—*Barry.*—*Garrick's ſuperiority.*

Act II. Scene I.

Polonius and Reynold.

POLONIUS.

Drinking — *fencing.*

FENCING is here, I think, put, in our author's phraſe, for *brawling* or *quarrelling*. A *fencer*, in the days of Shakſpeare, was generally underſtood to be one apt to be contentious and quarrelſome.

IDEM.

IDEM.

Breathe his faults so *quaintly*.

That is, so *artfully*, so *discreetly*.

IDEM.

And I believe it is a *fetch of warrant*.

'I think it a very justifiable mode of enqui into my son's conduct.'

This scene, between Polonius and his serv Reynold, has not been acted for more than a ce ry, and is by no means essential to the play.

OPHELIA.

And to the last bended their lights on me.

The first indication of his assumed madness Ha gives to Ophelia, from a supposition that she w impart immediate information of it to her fathe

POLONIUS.

I am sorry that with better judgment
I had not *quoted* him.

To *quote* is to write notes and observations f sermons or books, or to make remarks in a ta book or memorandum. In doing this, a mistak blunder may easily be made.

Scene II.

POLONIUS.

My liege and madam.

In the delineation of Polonius's character, great writers, Dr. Warburton and Dr. Johnson, fer widely. The first makes him a weak man a pedan[illegible] statesman. The other places him much superior rank: with him, Polonius is a

who has been bred in courts, exerciſed in buſineſs, ſtored with obſervations, confident of his knowledge, proud of his eloquence, but declining into dotage; in ſhort, it is by the advance of age alone that Dr. Johnſon ſolves the ſeeming inconſiſtency in the conduct of Polonius. The whole argument is elaborately written; but I cannot ſubmit to that deciſion, which pronounces that this ſtateſman was ever ſtrong in intellect or eloquent in diſcourſe. There is but one paſſage in the play which favours the ſuppoſed dereliction of this man's faculties; and that is, in the inſtructions he gives his ſervant, in the 1ſt ſcene of the 2d act, relating to him obſervations of his ſon's conduct; but, in the recapitulation of precepts, or maxims, independent of each other, and where there is no concatenation of reaſoning, a very young, as well as an old, man may eaſily ſuffer a lapſe of memory. In all other ſituations of the character, he is ever ready and furniſhed with ſuch materials as are ſuited to his incapacity and preſumption. His logic and rhetoric, to prove that Hamlet is in love with his daughter, are ſufficiently flowing, and, though weak and abſurd, betray no declenſion of his faculties. Such powers of mind as Polonius ever had he ſeems to enjoy with vigour; and can boaſt, with Charon, the *cruda viridiſque ſenectus.*—While the body remains unhurt by diſeaſe or outward accident, the mind, by being kept in continual exerciſe, ſtretches its faculties, and improves more and more. I could produce inſtances in Tully and Bacon; and, with ſtill more propriety, in Sophocles and Biſhop Hoadley. But why need I go farther than Dr. Johnſon himſelf? He is advanced ſome years above the age of ſeventy, without the leaſt ſymptom of intellectual decay. Is not his laſt work, of the Critical and Biographical

Biographical Prefaces, equal to any book he hath written?

But indeed there are abundant inſtances of the radical weakneſs of this character diſſeminated throughout the play. Hamlet, notwithſtanding he loves his daughter, Ophelia, wherever he meets him, turns him into ridicule, and never ſpeaks of him, when abſent, but with ſcorn and contempt. Hamlet is thirty years old; he could not but know if Polonius ever had been wife; and would not meanly take the advantage of doting age to hold him up to laughter. When the Prince diſmiſſes the Players, he takes the manager aſide; he bids him follow Polonius, and take care he does not mock him. To ridicule the infirmities of age was not the player's buſineſs, but the evident abſurdity and folly of the man juſtified the caution. To conclude: when Hamlet drags the dead body of this wretched politician from his hiding-place, he ſums up his character in very ſarcaſtical terms:

> ——— Indeed this counſellor
> Is now moſt ſtill, moſt ſecret, and moſt grave,
> Who was, in life, a foolish prating knave.

This, he ſays, in the preſence of the Queen, after he had confeſſed that his madneſs was aſſumed. Polonius is in no reſpect, that I know of, to be eſteemed. He is more obſequious and officious than he ought to be; a conduct which borders on knavery. Mirabel's character of Witwou'd, in the Way of the World, may help us to ſolve the difficulties which ariſe from ſome pertinent obſervations in the ſcene: 'He is a fool with a good memory; and failing, his folly is betrayed by not having recourſe to his common-place book.' Every man collects amongſt his acquaintance, ſome very ſilly

ſilly people, who ſurprize their hearers by throwing out remarks above their uſual courſe of converſe. To this tribe of men we may apply a line of Mr. Pope:

The fop lies hid in inconſiſtencies.

The conſtant practice of the ſtage, from the revival of Hamlet, ſoon after the reſtoration, to this day, may perhaps contribute to juſtify my opinion of this character. Polonius was always acted by what is termed a low comedian: By Lovell, Nokes, and Croſs, in former times; who were ſucceeded by Griffin, Hippiſley, Taſwell, and Shuter; and theſe again by Wilſon, Baddeley, and Edwin, in the preſent times.

About five and twenty years ſince, Mr. Garrick had formed a notion, that the character of Polonius had been miſtaken and miſrepreſented by the players, and that he was not deſigned by the author to excite laughter and be an object of ridicule. He imagined, I ſuppoſe, with his friend, Dr. Johnſon, that his falſe reaſoning and falſe wit were mere accidents in character; and that his leading feature was dotage encroaching upon wiſdom, which, by the bye, is no object of theatrical ſatire, and far from being, what is averred by the great commentator, a noble deſign in the author. Full of this opinion, Mr. Garrick perſuaded Woodward, on his benefit-night, to put himſelf in the part of Polonius. And what was the conſequence? — The character, diveſted of his ridiculous vivacity, appeared to the audience flat and inſipid. His dreſs was very different from what the part generally wore: the habit was grave and rich, cloth of ſcarlet and gold. Whether this was in imitation of ſome ſtateſman of the times I will not be poſitive, though

I have heard it ſo aſſerted. So little was the audience pleaſed with Woodward, or Woodward with himſelf, that he never after attempted Polonius.

POLONIUS.

——— A ſhort tale to make,
Fell into a ſadneſs, &c.

The ſtateſman's deſcription, of the ſeveral ſtages of Hamlet's madneſs, gives no proof that his faculties are declining; but rather of an inventive and ductile mind, which is ready to propagate any tale, or advance any propoſition, which might ſerve to prove his great wiſdom and ſagacity.

IDEM.

If he love her not——

We ſee, by this, the drift of the cunning ſtateſman; who, by this diſcovery of Hamlet's paſſion for his daughter, hopes to gain him for a ſon-in-law. This is, in our author, a ſtroke of nature.

HAMLET.

You are a *fiſhmonger.*

The word *fiſhmonger* is made uſe of by Hamlet to diſguiſe his real meaning, which is, 'You are a *fiſherman*, and angle for me; you want to know my real deſigns, or to pluck out the heart of my myſtery.'

IDEM.

For, if the ſun breed maggots in a dead dog——

Dr. Warburton's noble interpretation of this paſſage cannot be too much commended. Though the thought is not very ſimilar, it brings to my mind what Diogenes ſaid to one, who reproached him for living in filthy places: *The ſun viſits kennels, yet is not defiled.*

IDEM

IDEM.

I am poor in thanks.

Hamlet receives his old ſchoolfellows with a mixture of real diſtruſt and affected ceremony; they come upon him unawares, unannounced, and uninvited.

IDEM.

Nay, then, I have an eye on you.

'I ſee plainly I muſt be on my guard. Theſe men, I find, are mere agents of mighty employers; and are no other than court ſpies.'

IDEM.

How noble in reaſon! How infinite in faculties! In form and moving, how like a god! &c.

In uttering this beautiful deſcription of man and his powers, the energy of Garrick was very ſtriking; and the noble figure and movement of Barry added a double force to the ſentiment. Notwithſtanding this, I am of opinion, that, in this argument, in which Hamlet pretends to account for his melancholy, the actor is generally too tame and temperate in ſpeech and action, and too forgetful of the part he has aſſumed.

IDEM.

He that plays the King ſhall be welcome.

The parts of Kings are not always the moſt coveted by actors. King Duncan in Macbeth, Claudius in Hamlet, &c. are rather of the ſecond or third claſs than the firſt. Nor was the diadem or the purple robe a certain proof of characteriſtical ſuperiority amongſt the Greek players. Demoſthenes, in his oration De falſa Legatione, upbraids Æſchines with his being an actor of third parts; but, ſays the orator, the great emoluments, ſought

after, by theſe low actors, in the exhibition of Kings, were, to enter the ſtage dreſſed in the royal habiliments, bearing in their hands the regal ſceptre. 'Theodoſius and Ariſtodemus, the prime actors, often perſonated Antigone, while you, Æſchines, ſtrutted in King Creon in the ſame play.'

ROSENCRAUS.

We *eted* them on the way.

To *cete* is a Shropſhire term for to *overtake*.

HAMLET.

Whoſe lungs are tickled with the *fere*.

That is: 'The mirth of the fool, or clown, ſo powerful, that it will raiſe laughter in thoſe whoſe age and gravity are unuſed to it.' What Falſtaff ſays to the Chief Juſtice is ſomething ſimilar: 'Your lordſhip has ſomewhat of the ſaltneſs of age about you.' The *fere* and the *yellow leaf* are words expreſſive of decay.

ROSENCRAUS.

The inhibition comes by means of the late *innovation*.

But what *innovation?* The author did not mean, that the theatre was ſhut, by an order from above, on account of particular ſcandal being given by the eſtabliſhed players. Mr. Malone has proved, that the intention, of the act referred to, was quite oppoſite to the interpretation given it by the commentators. The *innovation* ſeems to be, the unexpected encouragement given to the ſinging-boys of the queen's chapel and St. Paul's, by which the regular comedians were reduced to the neceſſity of viſiting the provinces. They were therefore obliged to inhibit themſelves in the metropolis, from the want of cuſtomers.

IDEM.

IDEM.

Cry out upon the top of the queſtion.

Theſe children, inſtead of repreſenting the ſeveral characters allotted them with propriety, aſſumed a turgid ſtyle in ſpeaking; for true feeling, and real paſſion, they ſubſtituted ſtrut and noiſe. In plain terms, they tore a paſſion to rags.

HAMLET.

What! are they children?

Heywood, in his apology for actors, complains, that the poets of his time employed children to vent their malicious ſcandal, and utter abuſe againſt private characters. He inſiſted, at the ſame time, that the eſtabliſhed theatres never encouraged ſuch infamous practices.

ROSENCRAUS.

Hercules and his load too.

I underſtand, by this, that the children-actors did not only get the better of all the other eſtabliſhed companies, but alſo of the comedians of the Globe, on the Bank-ſide, which was eſteemed the moſt perfect of any. The figure of Hercules ſupporting a globe was fixed on the outſide of the play-houſe.

HAMLET.

I am but mad north-weſt; but, when the wind is ſoutherly, I know a hawk from a *handſaw*.

Hanmer has, I think, very properly, altered the word *handſaw* to *hernſhaw*, notwithſtanding Dr. Warburton's obſervation, that the poet found the proverb thus corrupted in the mouths of the people. But will a prince, or a well-bred-man, adopt

adopt the vulgariſms of the mob? Will a Weſtminſter ſcholar ſay, for The little *Cœmetery*, The little *Sentry*, becauſe he hears it ſo pronounced every day? Will a gentleman ſay, the *Pee-aches* in *Common Garden*, inſtead of the *Piazza* in *Covent Garden*, becauſe the market-people uſe that corruption?

POLONIUS.

Scene undividable and poem unlimited.

A drama which is confined to place, and another unlimited by rules.

HAMLET.

What! my young lady and miſtreſs! I wiſh your voice, like a piece of uncurrent gold, be not cracked within the ring.

Hamlet addreſſes himſelf to the young lad who acted the female character. Before the Reſtoration, women's parts, ſays Cibber, were acted by boys, and men with effeminate countenances. Hart and Mohun were apprentices to Robinſon and another eminent comedian, and acted female characters. The voices of girls do not alter like thoſe of boys, which generally, at a certain age, become rough and manly. However, the *liberal* language of Shakſpeare, to uſe a phraſe of his own, is well explained, by authorities adduced from Ben Jonſon by Mr. Steevens.

IDEM.

The altitude of a *chioppine*.

High-heeled ſhoes were formerly worn by women of rank. Tom Coriat in his Crudities mentions ſome that were of ſuch a height, that it was ſcarcely poſſible to walk with them. He tells a ſtory

ſtory of a Venetian lady, who expoſed herſelf to laughter by tumbling down, on account of her *chioppines* being made ſo very exalted.

The old Engliſh word for high-heeled ſhoes, was *moils*, which Dr. Skinner thus defines: *Calcei altioribus ſolais ſuppaſti, olim regibus et magnatibus uſitati.*

The word *chioppine* means alſo a Scotch meaſure, for liquor, which anſwers to our pint.

IDEM.

See the players well beſtowed. They are the abſtract and brief chronicles of the times.

The encouragement which the players met with from the people, who forſook the churches to croud the theatres, brought on them the reſentment and cenſure of the clergy of our own church as well as of the puritans. Their lives were examined with an inquiſitorial acrimony, and their actions groſsly miſrepreſented Our author, in common with his brethren, felt and reſented the unjuſt attack; he has therefore devoted this part of his play to a vindication of the ſtage.

IDEM.

After your death you had better have a bad epitaph than their ill report while you live.

A ſarcaſtic epitaph is not felt by the dead; but a bad or ridiculous character of the living, by men ſo univerſally known, and ſo generally welcome, as the comedians, may be followed with ſome inconvenience.

Of all the commentators upon our author, Dr. Johnſon ſeems to keep moſt clear of illiberal reproaches on the player-editors. He does not charge them,

them, like others, with groſs ignorance and in
pacity. Theobald, Warburton, and another cri
have, on this ſubject, ſometimes indulged
aſperity of phraſe not very becoming the ſtyle
gentlemen.

I ſhall here, in honour of the profeſſion
players, ſubjoin a paſſage, I lately read, in
oration of Demoſthenes, againſt Æſchines,
falſa Legatione, and which reflects great credit
on Satyrus, a very eminent comic actor of Athe
This man was the friend and inſtructor of D
moſthenes; and, at the ſame time, remarka
for mimicking his defects, which tended, as mu
perhaps, as any thing, to render him an acco
pliſhed orator. I am perſuaded the reader w
excuſe my introducing it in this place, eſpecia
as the learned Dr. Leland has not tranſlated t
oration which Aſcham terms a ſchool of inſtru
tion in itſelf.

'When Philip of Macedon had taken the c
of Olynthus, he celebrated the Olympic gam
He invited to the feſtival all the profeſſors of
polite arts. He entertained them with the choic
banquets, and beſtowed crowns upon the victo
During the height of the feſtival, he aſked S
tyrus, the comedian, why, of all his gueſts,
alone had aſked for no gift, nor had deſired a
mark of his favour? Did he ſuppoſe him to
of a mean and ſordid diſpoſition? or did he co
ceive that he had entertained any ill will towa
him?

'Satyrus modeſtly replied, that he ſtood in
need of thoſe acts of munificence which oth
demanded. What he ſhould requeſt of the ki
could with the greateſt facility be granted; b
he had ſome fears leſt his petition ſhould be
jec

jected. Philip encouraged him to urge his demand; and, with a facetious gaiety, aſſured him, that he would refuſe him nothing he ſhould aſk.

'Satyrus then informed the king, that his old acquaintance and hoſt, Apollophanes of Pydna, having been ſlain through treachery, his relations, terrified at the accident, had, for ſafety, conveyed his two young daughters to Olynthus; but, as that city had now become ſubjugated to his majeſty's arms, they were in the condition of priſoners and captives. Now the ſole boon I ſhall beg of you, continued the player, is, that you would give orders for their deliverance into my hands; not for the ſake of gaining any advantage to myſelf, but that I may beſtow on them portions equal to their birth and education, and prevent their falling into any hardſhips or diſgrace unworthy of me or their father.

'The whole aſſembly, upon hearing this generous requeſt of Satyrus, broke out into loud and tumultuous applauſe; and Philip, with a good grace, immediately complied with his wiſhes.'

HAMLET.

All his viſage *warm'd*.

'Inſtead of *warm'd*, Dr. Warburton would ſubſtitute *wann'd*.' The context may poſſibly afford ſome ground for that alteration; but I cannot agree, with Mr. Steevens, that the actor never turns pale in repreſenting extreme agony and diſtreſs of mind. In ſome very affecting ſcenes, Garrick and Mrs. Cibber have worked themſelves up to the ſhedding of tears, eſpecially in the parts of Lear and Cordelia. Mrs. Siddons, very lately, in the third act of the Fair Penitent, was ſo far

HAMLET.

What's Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba?

Mr. Upton and Sir John Hawkins have, in reference to this line, quoted the ſtory of the Pherean tyrant, who quitted the theatre with tears, on ſeeing the diſtreſs of Hecuba in the tragedy of the Troades. To this ſtory Mr. Pope alludes in his prologue to Cato:

Tyrants no more their ſavage natures kept,
And, foes to virtue, wonder'd how they wept.

Upon a line in this ſpeech of Hamlet, Mr. Steevens obſerves, that there muſt have been, in the time of Shakſpeare, ſeveral very excellent tragedians, or he would not have formed characters ſuch as Hamlet, Lear, &c. which he had no proſpect of ſeeing repreſented with force and propriety. Mr. Steevens may know, that the principal tragic parts of Shakſpeare were acted chiefly by Burbage and Taylor. Allen, the other great actor, is not in the liſts of Shakſpeare's, Ben Jonſon's, and Beaumont and Fletcher's, plays.

IDEM.

Remorſeleſs, *treacherous*, *letcherous*, kindleſs, villain!

Beſides the jingle of *letcherous* and *treacherous*, the firſt is become almoſt obſolete, and, in compliance with modern manners, ſhould be omitted, or exchanged for a word leſs offenſive.

IDEM.

——— I have heard,
That guilty creatures, ſitting at a play,
Have, by the very cunning of the ſcene,
Been ſtruck ſo to the ſoul, that preſently
They have proclaim'd their malefactions.

The

The author alludes to a known ſtory, that was recent in the memory of thoſe who were the firſt ſpectators of this tragedy; and is recorded by T. Heywood, in his Apology for Actors, publiſhed in 1612. 'The comedians, belonging to the Earl of Suſſex, acted a play, called Frier Francis, at Lynn Regis, in Norfolk, in which the ſtory of a woman was repreſented, who, to enjoy, unmoleſted, the company of a young fellow, had murdered her huſband: ſhe is brought on the ſtage as haunted by his ghoſt. —— During the exhibition of this play, a woman, who was an inhabitant of Lynn, was ſo ſtruck with what ſhe ſaw upon the ſtage, that ſhe ſhrieked, and cried out, Oh! my huſband! my huſband! Upon the people's enquiring the reaſon of this exclamation, ſhe confeſſed, that, ſeveral years before that time, to ſecure the love of a certain gentleman, ſhe had poiſoned her huſband, whoſe fearful image ſeemed to appear before her in the ſhape of the ghoſt in the play. The woman was afterwards tried and condemned for the fact.' For the truth of this ſtory, Heywood refers his readers to the records of Lynn, and many living witneſſes.

A more recent effect of ſtage-repreſentation, to rouſe a ſenſe of guilt in the mind of a ſpectator, has been told me with ſuch proofs of authenticity that I cannot diſbelieve it.

Dr. Barrowby was, many years ſince, ſent for to attend a young lad who was an apprentice to a tradeſman in the city: he found him extremely indiſpoſed and low-ſpirited. After ſome queſtions, aſked him by the doctor, the boy ſaid, his diſtemper was owing to his having lately ſeen the tragedy of George Barnwell. His caſe, he ſaid, reſembled Barnwell's ſo far as the robbing of his maſter;

maſter; and this, he ſaid, lay very heavy upo his mind.

I D E M.

I'll *tent* him to the quick.

Dr. Johnſon interprets *tent* to be the ſearchi his conſcience, as *tents* are applied to probe wound This meaning I ſhall not contradict. But *to ta* is a north-country phraſe, which ſignifies, *to lo to, to attend to*. Ray, from Cheſhire Dialogue gives this proverb: 'I'll *tent* thee, quoth Wood that is, I'll *watch thee narrowly*. And perha this meaning may be farther confirmed by wh Hamlet afterwards ſays to Horatio, in the next ac

For I my eyes will rivet faſt to his.

To take tent is a Scotch phraſe, at this da for adviſing a perſon to be *attentive* to a particul buſineſs.

I D E M.

——— The play's the thing
Wherein I'll catch the conſcience of the King.

That the repreſentation of murder, before t murderer, will not always produce the deſir effect, we have a remarkable inſtance in the ſto of Derby and Fiſher:

They were two gentlemen very intimately a quainted. The latter was a dependent on th former, who generouſly ſupplied him with th means of living as became a man of birth and edu cation. But no benefits are ſufficient to bind th baſe and the ungrateful: after parting, one even ing, with Mr. Derby, at his chambers in th Temple, with all the uſual marks of friendſhi

Fiſh

Fiſher contrived to get into his apartments, with an intent to rob and murder his friend. This he unhappily accompliſhed. For ſome time, no ſuſpicion fell on the murderer; he appeared, as uſual, in all public places. He was in a ſide-box at the play of Hamlet; and, when Wilks uttered that part of the ſoliloquy, which ſpoke of 'guilty creatures ſitting at a play,' a lady turned about, and, looking at him, ſaid, 'I wiſh the villain, who murdered Mr. Derby, were here!' The lady and Fiſher were ſtrangers to each other. It was afterwards known, that this was the man who had killed his friend. The perſons, preſent in the box, declared, that neither the ſpeech from the actor, nor the exclamation from the lady, made the leaſt external impreſſion on the murderer. Fiſher ſoon after eſcaped to Rome, where he profeſſed himſelf a Roman Catholic, and gained an aſylum. About five and twenty years ſince, my friend, Mr. Richard Wilſon, the landſcape-painter, ſaw Fiſher at Rome, and ſpoke to him. He was then, I think, one of the conoſcenti, and a picture-dealer.*

Since the firſt acting of this tragedy, the commentators are agreed that the author made many additions to it; more eſpecially, it is thought, reſpecting the players, whoſe cauſe was his own, and which he eſpouſed upon the gene[illegible] of defence, that it was not only not *malu*[illegible] really beneficial to ſociety, and particul[illegible] detection of enormous crimes. —— [illegible] ſee, puts his ſalvation upon the [illegible] of guilt in the repreſentation [illegible] more confidence in the ſucce[illegible]

* Mr. Derby was ſon of the ſecon[illegible] office.

viſion that had aſſumed the form of his *noble ther*. But this was not all: a quarrel had ari between Ben Jonſon and the players; the cauſe is almoſt unknown; but it is certain, the three or four of his pieces, which Ben wr after his Every Man out of his Humour, w acted by children. One of them, called Poetaſter, was an outrageous ſatire upon Dec and ſeveral of the actors. I have ſaid ſo m upon this ſubject, in a review of Jonſon's pie that I ſhall not here take up much of the read time. — Shakſpeare, we ſee, has diſcuſſed the gument, relative to the encouragement of children preferably to the eſtabliſhed comedia with great judgment and temper. And I thin can perceive ſome leſſon of caution, given to J ſon and others, on account of their affected c tempt of the players: 'You had better have bad epitaph, after your death, than their ill rep while you live,' ſeems to be of this kind. T rupture, between Jonſon and the players, laſt I believe, from 1599, till the death of Qu Elizabeth, in 1603. It is not impoſſible but t King James, who loved and patroniſed theatri diverſions, by the perſonal encouragement he g to Shakſpeare, might be the means of reconcili the contending parties. We know that Shakſpea aſſiſted Jonſon in writing his Sejanus; and D Johnſon and Dr. Farmer are of opinion th Ben wrote part of the prologue and epilogue Henry VIII. The ill fate of Sejanus, at the Glob did not deter Jonſon from giving the ſame playe his Fox and Alchemiſt. But ſo capricious was h temper, that, notwithſtanding the deſerved ſucce of theſe comedies, he employed children to a his Silent Woman, a piece utterly unfit, I ſhou

thin

think, to be repreſented by any but actors of the moſt eſtabliſhed merit.

In the ſpeaking of this impaſſioned ſoliloquy, Wilks had an ample field to diſplay the warmth of his diſpoſition. The actor's genuine temper ſometimes combines itſelf ſo ſtrongly with the feelings appropriated to the character, that the ſcene receives additional advantage from it. The various paſſions of the ſpeech he felt with energy and expreſſed with vehemence; to give force to ſentiment, this player would ſometimes ſtrike the ſyllables, with too much ardour, and, in the judicious ear, create ſomething like diſſonance rather than harmony; but this was not frequent with him.

In this ſituation of Hamlet, Barry was pleaſingly animated. But here it muſt be owned, that Garrick roſe ſuperior to all competition: his ſelf-expoſtulations, and upbraidings of cowardice and puſillanimity, were ſtrongly pointed, and blended with marks of contemptuous indignation; the deſcription of his uncle held up, at once, a portrait of horror, and deriſion. When he cloſed his ſtrong paintings with the epithet, *kindleſs* villain! a tear of anguiſh gave a moſt pathetic ſoftneſs to the whole paſſionate ebullition. One ſtrong feature of Hamlet's character is filial piety: this Garrick preſerved through the part. By reſtoring a few lines, which preceding Hamlets had omitted, he gave a vigour, as well as connection, to the various members of the ſoliloquy. It is impoſſible to forget the more than common attention of the audience, which his action and change of voice commanded when he pronounced—

——— I have heard,
That guilty creatures, ſitting at a play——

and the following lines, to the end of the act.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXXVII.

Treachery of Guildenſtern and Roſencraus.—Soliloquy of To be or not to be.—*Reſemblance of part of it to the ſentiments of Socrates, in his apology to the Areopagus.— Greek quotation.— Latin verſion.— Young's Revenge.*—Whips and ſcorns of time.— *Mr. Steevens.*— Quietus.— Bodkin *explained.— Wilks.— His utterance of* To be or not to be.— *His greateſt error in deportment.—Garrick's expreſſion—and action.—Aſſumed madneſs, to Ophelia, by Garrick, Barry, Sheridan, Henderſon.— Advice to the players.*—Periwig-pated fellows.— *Madame Couvreur.—La Clairon, Le Kin.—Full-bottom wigs;—worn till* 1720.—*Addiſon, Congreve, Wilks, Booth, and Cibber.—Macbeth new-dreſſed by Macklin.—Antient and modern pantomimes.—Auguſtus, and Pylades the mime.*—Age and body of the time.—*Tarleton and Kempe.—Hippiſley, Shuter, King.—Pinkethman and Wilks.—Odd agreement.— Anecdote of Pinkethman.—Henderſon's excellence.—Horatio and Pylades.—Chorus.—Dr. Hurd.—Mrs. Montague and Mr. Colman.—Ridiculous practice of ſtage-murderers.—Garrick's unvaried action.*—Foreſt of feathers *and* a cry of players.—Paddock *and* Peacock.—Duty too bold *explained.—Fear perſonified.—The King's ſoliloquy. —Keen, Quin.—Hulet.*—How his audit ſtands. —*Hamlet's vindictive temper.—Voltaire's rat trapped.*—As kill a king.—None wed the ſecond but who kill'd the firſt.—*Queen charged with murder.* —Takes off the roſe, &c. *explained differently from Mr. Steevens.—The nature of motion—Several paſſages attempted to be explained.—Two pictures in little.—Stage trick of the actor at the entrance of the Ghoſt.*—My father in his habit, as he liv'd.—Unpeg the baſket on the houſe-top *explained.*

plained.—Juſt ſuſpicions, in Hamlet, of his two ſchoolfellows.—Merit of the ſcene between Hamlet and his mother.—Taylor, Betterton, Wilks, Milward.—Garrick.— Barry.—Sheridan — Henderſon. — Smith. — Lady Slinzſby. — Mrs. Porter, Mrs. Hallam, Mrs. Pritchard.

Act III. Scene I.

The King, Queen, &c.

GUILDENSTERN.

But with a craſty madneſs keeps aloof,
When we would bring him to ſome confeſſion
Of his true ſtate.

THIS ſpeech of Guildenſtern contains a full confirmation of the baſeneſs and treachery of theſe ſchoolfellows of Hamlet, who betray him, as far as lies in their power, to the King. In their commerce with the Prince, they ſeem to have nothing in view, but, at his expence, with the loſs of their own honour, to gain *ſuch thanks as fits a king's remembrance.*

HAMLET.

To be or not to be.

This celebrated ſoliloquy will be admired, got by rote, and conſtantly repeated, by all perſons of taſte, as long as the exiſtence of our language.

Some lines of this ſpeech bear ſuch a ſtrong reſemblance to an argument, relating to the future exiſtence of the ſoul, in Plato's Apology of Socrates before the Areopagus, that, if that part of the great philoſopher's works had been tranſlated into Engliſh in our author's life-time, I ſhould have imagined he had thence borrowed ſeveral ſentiments in

in the ſoliloquy. But, in Mr. Malone's accura
liſt, of antient authors tranſlated into Engliſh in t
reigns of Elizabeth and James, the Dialogue
Axiochus is the only part of Plato then publiſhe
in Engliſh.

The paſſage, in this author, I refer to, is in t
32d ſection of the Apologia, as follows in t
Greek. Foſter's edit. Ox. 1765.

Δυοιν γαρ θατερον εστι το τεθναιναι· η γαρ ειον μηδεν ειν
μηδ' αισθησιν μηδεμιαν μηδεως εχειν του τεθνεωτα, η κα
τα λεγομενα μεταβολη τις τυγχανει ουσα και μετοικησις τ
ψυχης του τοπου του ενθενδε εις αλλον τοπον· και ειτε δε μηδεμ
αισθησις εστιν, αλλ' οιον υπνος, επειδαν τις καθευδων μ
οναρ μηδεν ορᾳ, θαυμασιον κερδος αν εη ο θανατος.

Mors enim *neceſſe eſt* ſit alterum de duobus:
aut in nihilum redeat, et omnes omnino ſenſus ami
tant mortuus; aut, quemadmodum dicitur, in aliu
quendam locum ex his locis morte migretur.
ſive ſenſus extinguitur, morſque ei ſomno ſimilis e
qui nonnunquam ſine viſis ſomniorum placatiſſima
quietem affert, immenſum ſane lucrum eſt emo

The θαυμασιον κερδος of the original ſeems to a
ſwer fully to our author's *conſummation devoutly be wiſhed for*. The reſt of the ſection, though a
mirable, is different in argument from the remai
ing part of the ſoliloquy. But Dr. Young has,
his Revenge, taken advantage of a noble ſentimer
of Socrates, who pleaſes himſelf with the idea
meeting, in the other world, the ſhades of Mino
Rhadamanthus, Æacus, Triptolemus, &c.—S
Alonzo, in the fourth act of the Revenge.

Death joins us to the great majority!
'Tis to be born to Plato's and to Cæſars:
'Tis to be great for ever!

IDEM.

For who would bear the whips and ſcorns of time?

Notwithſtanding all the learned commentators have ſaid on theſe words, it ſeems to me very obvious, that, without any particular alluſion to his own age, the author meant a general ſentiment concerning ſuch common wrongs and afflictions to which life, and eſpecially long life, is ever expoſed.

Mr. Steevens, in addition to his large note on this quotation, aſſures us, that there was more illiberal private abuſe, and peeviſh ſatire, publiſhed in the reigns of Queen Elizabeth and King James I. than in any other age, except the preſent.

This is not very clear to me: but happy is the man, who can, with a good conſcience, affirm, he never was guilty of the baſe practice of wounding the fair reputation of others, or of diſturbing the peace of families by malicious and rancorous ſlander. The propagation of obloquy, to gain wealth and preferment, may admit of ſome exculpation; but, of all abuſe, that, which is ſpontaneous and unprovoked, is the moſt unaccountable.—What does Mr. Steevens think of a gentleman, who, when at his country-ſeat, found no amuſement ſo pleaſing as writing libels upon his neighbours, and throwing them over their garden-walls, with a malevolent deſign to torment thoſe who had never offended him?

IDEM.

——— Himſelf might his *quietus* make
With a bare *bodkin*.

The word *quietus* is well explained, from good authority, by Mr. Steevens.—But to inſtance a *Roman dagger* for a *bodkin*, when the author moſt certainly means the ſmalleſt inſtrument of deſtruction that

that can be uſed, is ſurely a very great miſapplication of criticiſm. Skinner explains *bodkin* to be *crinium incernicu'um, ſeu diſcerniculum*; *acus crinalis, a hair pin or needle*, which, if properly applied, would diſpatch a man as ſoon as a dagger or a ſword. All the authorities, produced in this place to authenticate the application of the word *bodkin* as ſynonimous to *dagger* or *ſtilletto*, ſerve only to miſlead the reader.

Wilks ſpoke this ſoliloquy with a pleaſing melancholy of countenance and grave deſpondency of action. He was leſs ſkilful in the utterance of ſentiment than paſſion. His greateſt fault, in deportment, proceeded from his aptneſs to move or ſhift his ground. It was ſaid of him, by a ſour critic, that he could never ſtand ſtill.—This fault he never could entirely free himſelf from, though often put in mind of it.

Barry, not having middle tones in his voice, could not give the requiſite grave energy to ſentiment; he was therefore obliged, in ſome ſituations of character, to raiſe his powers of ſpeech above their ordinary tone. Garrick, by an expreſſive countenance and flexible voice, gave full force to the profound reflections of this meditation on futurity, which he purſued, through all their progreſs, with exquiſite judgment and addreſs.

IDEM.

——————— Nymph, in thy oriſons
Be all my ſins remember'd.

This, ſays Dr. Johnſon, is a touch of nature. for Hamlet, on the ſight of Ophelia, does not recollect himſelf; he forgets that he was to perſonate the madman.—It is very true; for it was not poſſible that he could, after ſuch ſolemn ſentiments, aſſume imme

immediately a perſonated character. He does not affect inſanity, it ſhould be obſerved, till Ophelia offers to return his love-preſents. This awakens him into a ſenſe of his ſituation; as, from that circumſtance, he muſt conclude, that her behaviour to him was regulated by her father, and perhaps with the King's concurrence.

IDEM.

Virtue cannot ſo inoculate our old ſtock, but we ſhall reliſh of it.

'Notwithſtanding all our endeavours to the contrary, the ſin of our firſt parents will be predominant.'

IDEM.

To a nunnery go.

The aſſumed madneſs with Ophelia was, by Garrick, in my opinion, made too boiſterous. He ſhould have remembered, that he was reaſoning with a young lady, to whom he had profeſſed the tenderneſs of paſſion. Wilks retained enough of diſguiſed madneſs; but, at the ſame time, preſerved the feelings of a lover and the delicacy of a gentleman. Barry was not ſo violent as Garrick, and was conſequently nearer to the intention of the author. Sheridan, Smith, and Henderſon, have all, in this ſcene, avoided a manner too outrageous.

Scene II.

Hamlet and the players.

HAMLET.

Speak the ſpeech, &c.

I have always conſidered the advice of Hamlet to the Players as Shakſpeare's legacy of love to his fellows,

lows, the comedians. Such he called them in his time, and such he termed ſome of them in will. Wilks, I believe, never ſpoke it; a conjecture it was omitted, from the death of terton, till the good taſte of Garrick revive The rules were ſuch as became the mouth conſummate maſter in his profeſſion.

IDEM.

Oh! it offends me to the ſoul, to hear a robuſtious *pe parted* fellow tear a paſſion to tatters.

Long is the period before taſte and judg can prevail over eſtabliſhed cuſtom, be it ev erroneous.

The firſt French actreſs, who introduced markable change in the female theatrical h was Madame Couvreur.* To the body of robe ſhe added a long and majeſtic train, conformable to the antique. But the hero antiquity, on the French ſtage, were as abſ habited as the heroines. Scipio, Cæſar, Brutus, wore indeed the antient cuiraſs and buſ but their heads were covered with French and adorned with large plumes of feathers. Clairon and Le Kin, from a love to the which they cultivated with a ſuperior taſte, entirely altered the old mode of dreſſing, and dered it more comformable to the *coſtume*.

The heads of the Engliſh actors were, long time, covered with large full-bottomed riwigs, a faſhion introduced in the reig Charles II. which was not entirely diſuſed in p till about the year 1720. Addiſon, Congreve, Steele, met, at Button's coffee-houſe, in l flo

* This celebrated actreſs died in 1730.

flowing, flaxen, wigs; Booth, Wilks, and Cibber, when full-dreſſed, wore the ſame. Till within theſe twenty-five years, our Tamerlanes and Catos had as much hair on their heads as our judges on the bench. —— Booth was a claſſical ſcholar, and well acquainted with the polite arts; he was converſant with the remains of antiquity, with buſts, coins, &c. nor could he approve ſuch a violation of propriety; but his indolence got the better of his good taſte, and he became a conformiſt to a cuſtom which he deſpiſed. I have been told, that he and Wilks beſtowed forty guineas each on the exorbitant thatching of their heads. We have, at length, emancipated ourſelves from the uſual mode of ornamenting our heroes, and are coming nearer to truth and nature. The tragedy of Macbeth would have been ſtill dreſſed in modern habits, if the good taſte of Mr. Macklin had not introduced the old highland military habit Is it not an abſolute contradiction to common ſenſe, that the play of Hamlet ſhould in dreſs be modernized, and the King of Denmark wear an order which was inſtituted ſeveral hundred years after the action of the tragedy? It is but within theſe twenty years, that the plays, of Richard III. and Henry VIII. were diſtinguiſhed by the two principal characters being dreſſed with propriety, though differently from all the reſt. Falſtaff was, till very lately, an unique in dreſs as well as character.

IDEM.

Inexplicable dumb ſhows and noiſe.

Thoſe dumb repreſentations, as they are well explained, from authority, by Mr. Steevens, did

not reſemble either antient or modern pantomi
The antient mimes were ſo expert at the re
ſentation of thought by action, that, in proce
time, they became greater favourites, with
people of Rome, than the comedians themſe
Some of them had the art to repreſent the a
of an entire play, ſuch as the Hercules furen
the delight and aſtoniſhment of the ſpectators
great a darling of the Romans was Pylades, i
preſenting characters by dancing with emo
that, it is ſaid, Auguſtus reconciled the peop
many diſagreeable impoſts by recalling him
baniſhment, a penalty he had incurred by poi
to a ſpectator, with his finger, who had diſpl
him.

IDEM.

——— The very age and body of the time his form
preſſure.

From acting, Hamlet is inſenſibly drawn i
partial deſcription of dramatic fable. I t
with ſubmiſſion to Dr. Johnſon and Mr. Steev
that, 'the age and body of the time' means
particular vices and follies of the age we live
to correct theſe is the buſineſs of the dram
poet. In Ariſtophanes, and other antient dr
tiſts, the moral and political hiſtory of their t
might have been partly traced. In Shakſpe
Ben Jonſon, Fletcher, and Maſſinger, well
derſtood, we might find ſome actions portraye
the age in which *they* lived.

IDEM.

And let thoſe, that play your Clowns, ſpeak no more t
ſet down for them.

Tar

Tarleton and Kempe, who were excellent comic actors in our author's days, and generally perſonated the Fool, or Clown, were men of ready wit and flowing humour. They ſtood in need of a curb to the wild ſallies of their exuberant fancy, which Shakſpeare here preſents them.

It muſt be confeſſed, that the actors, termed low comedians, are too guilty of adding to their author's text. Sometimes, indeed it happens, that the wit, or happy imagination, of the actor, will be of ſervice to the ſituation in which he is placed, and unexpectedly give a relief or embelliſhment to that which would otherwiſe be neglected, or perhaps diſapproved.

The contrary practice is, however, much more common. Hippiſley not ſeldom in this point offended, Shuter oftener, King rarely, Jonſon and Weſton ſcarcely ever; but Will. Pinkethman, of merry memory, was in ſuch full poſſeſſion of the galleries, that he would hold diſcourſe with them for ſeveral minutes. To fine him for this fault was in vain; he could not forſake it, and the managers were too generous to curtail him of his income. At length, I was told, he and Wilks came to this whimſical agreement: Pinkey conſented, That, whenever he was guilty of correſponding with the gods, he ſhould receive, on his back, three ſmart ſtrokes of Bob Wilks's cane. — This fine, however, was, I believe, never exacted. — I ſhall give the reader one ſpecimen of his unſeaſonable drollery.

In the play of the Recruiting Officer, Wilks was the Captain Plume, and Pinkethman one of the Recruits. The Captain, when he enliſted him, aſked his name: inſtead of anſwering as he ought, Pinkey replied, 'Why! don't you know me?

my name, Bob? I thought every fool had known that!' Wilks, in rage, whiſpered to him the name of the Recruit, Thomas Appletree. The other retorted aloud, 'Thomas Appletree! Thomas Devil! my name is Will. Pinkethman:' and, immediately addreſſing an inhabitant of the upper regions, he ſaid, 'Hark you, friend: don't you know my name?' — 'Yes, Maſter Pinkey,' ſaid a reſpondent, 'we know it very well.' The playhouſe was now in an uproar; the audience, at firſt, enjoyed the petulant folly of Pinkethman and the diſtreſs of Wilks; but, in the progreſs of the joke, it grew tireſome, and Pinkey met with his deſerts, a very ſevere reprimand in a hiſs; and this mark of diſpleaſure he changed into applauſe, by crying out, with a countenance as melancholy as he could make it, in a loud naſal twang, *Odſo! I fear I am wrong!*

To the honour of the preſent race of comic actors, it muſt be ſaid, that they ſeldom indulge themſelves in adding their own to the author's ſenſe. Men of abilities they generally are; and, as ſuch, often ſuggeſt ſallies of pleaſantry and ſituations of humour to the authors behind the curtain, and not ſeldom contribute to the mirth and gaiety of the ſcene by their ingenuity.

In giving inſtructions to his own ſociety, there is ſome delicacy required in the behaviour of the actor, who, in the perſon of a Prince, takes upon him to cenſure and reform their errors. Mr. Garrick delivered theſe theatrical precepts with much force and propriety; but he did not accompany them with the condeſcending quality expected from the high-bred man of rank. He rather ſuſtained the office of a ſtage-manager, and conſummate maſter of the art, than that of the generous friend

friend and princely monitor. Mr. Henderson has, in this scene, less of the pedagogue and more of the gentleman.

IDEM.

Horatio, thou art e'en as just a man
As ere my conversation met withal, &c.

The warm and pathetic address of Hamlet to his friend is, I think, not unlike that of Orestes to Pylades in the Electra of Euripides:

Πυλαδη, σε γε δη πρωτον ανθρωπων εγω
Πιστον νομιζω και φιλον ξενον εμοι, κ. τ. λ.

Thee, O my Pylades, I deem the first
Of men for thy fidelity and friendship,
And my unsever'd comrade!

Wodhull's Translation.

IDEM.

I must be idle.

'If I am observed to converse with you seriously, my plot will be disconcerted; I must therefore re-assume madness.'

ROSENCRAUS.

They [the players] stay upon your patience.

'Submissively, or on sufferance, they attend your commands.'

HAMLET.

Be not you ashamed to shew, and they will tell you what it means.

Mr. Steevens reproves the author, for putting into the mouth of Hamlet unbecoming expressions during

during his perſonated madneſs. But it has been noticed, by thoſe who have viſited the cells of lunatics, that females, the moſt remarkable for modeſty, have, in their inſanity, thrown out very indecent and unbecoming expreſſions. In her madneſs, the innocent Ophelia chants ſcraps of ſuch ſongs as would not have entered into her mind when in her perfect ſenſes.

OPHELIA.

You are as good as a *chorus*, my lord.

Shakſpeare knew little of the antient *chorus*. What he ſo terms, of his own, is always in the ſhape of a prologue. The learned B. Jonſon has, in his Catiline, introduced the Ghoſt of Sylla in a rhiming kind of exordium or prologue; to which he has added four odes, to be ſung between the acts, as *chorus*, in various unequal meaſure.

Milton, in his *chorus* to Samſon Agoniſtes, is the genuine imitator of Æſchylus and Sophocles. Mr. Maſon has, by his enchanting poetry, in his muſical odes to Elfrida and Caractacus, almoſt ſurpriſed the public into a taſte for that part of the antient tragedy.

Though it does not become me to determine which of the two champions, for and againſt the *chorus*, the learned Dr. Hurd and Mrs. Montague, is in the right; yet I cannot help leaning to the opinion of Mr. Colman; who, in his notes to his happy tranſlation of Horace's Art of Poetry, obſerves, —— 'That, if a *chorus* be really neceſſary, our dramas, like thoſe of the antients, ſhould be rendered wholly muſical. The dances alſo will then claim their place, and the pretenſions of Veſtris and Noverre muſt be admitted as claſſical.

claſſical. Such a ſpectacle, if not more natural than the modern, would at leaſt be conſiſtent; but, to introduce a groupe of ſpectatorial actors, ſome ſpeaking in one part of the drama and ſinging in another, is as ſtrange and incoherent a medley, and full as unclaſſical, as the dialogue and airs in the Beggar's Opera.'

HAMLET.

Begin, murderer; leave thy damnable faces, and begin.

This contains a cenſure upon the cuſtom of certain actors, who were caſt into the parts of conſpirators, traitors, and murderers, who uſed to diſguiſe themſelves in large black wigs; and diſtort their features, in order to appear terrible; in ſhort, to diſcover that which their art ſhould teach them to conceal. I have ſeen Hippiſley act the firſt Murderer in Macbeth: his face was made pale with chalk, diſtinguiſhed with large whiſkers, and a long black wig. This cuſtom, of dreſſing ſo prepoſterouſly the hateful implements of the tragic ſcene, is now almoſt worn out.

IDEM.

I could interpret between you and your lover, if I could ſee the puppets dallying.

That is, 'I could act the part of maſter of the puppet-ſhow, and interpret both for you and your lover, if I ſaw the leaſt prelude of amorous inclination.'

IDEM.

For ſome muſt laugh, while ſome muſt weep;
Thus runs the world away.

In the uttering of this line and a half it was Garrick's conſtant practice to pull out a white hand

handkerchief, and, walking about the ſtage, to twirl it round with vehemence. This action can incur no juſt cenſure, except from its conſtant repetition. He, of all the players I ever ſaw, gave the greateſt variety to action and deportment; nor could I help wondering, that ſo great an artiſt ſhould, in this inſtance, tie himſelf down to one particular mode, when his ſituation would admit of ſo many. The conforming to an uniform method of action makes the whole appear a leſſon got by rote rather than the effort of genuine feeling.

HIDEM.

Would not this, ſir, and a *foreſt of feathers*, get me a fellowſhip in a *cry of players*?

HORATIO.

Half.

HAMLET.

——— A whole one.

The *foreſt of feathers* alludes to large plumes of feathers which the old actors wore on their heads in characters of heroiſm and dignity. This practice was adopted at the Reſtoration, and continued in force till Mr. Garrick's æra of management. His ſuperior taſte got rid of the incumbrance.

Cry of players is, as Mr. Steevens obſerves, a *company of comedians*. The old actors divided their profits into equal or unequal ſhares, according to their ſeveral degrees of merit. Sometimes, indeed, a very indifferent performer, by his talents as a writer, gained an equal, if not a ſuperior, portion of the ſurplus. It likewiſe not unfrequently happened, that a man, who had no other deſert

deſert than furniſhing a large part of the wardrobe, the ſcenes, and other decorations, claimed a conſiderable part of the treaſure. Tucca, in Ben Jonſon's Poetaſter, calls one of the lower actors *Three-Shares*.

This cuſtom, of portioning out the income of the theatre into parts, ſubſiſted long amongſt the French comedians, and is, I believe, practiſed to this day. —— Downs, in his Stage-Hiſtory, informs us, that the principal actors of the king's threatre, in Drury-lane, Hart, Mohun, &c. on an annual diviſion of their profits, gained ſometimes 1000l. each.

IDEM.

A very, very, *peacock*.

Notwithſtanding the very plauſible reading of *paddock*, inſtead of *peacock*, propoſed by Mr. Theobald, I cannot help thinking, with Mr. Pope, that Shakſpeare alluded to the well known fable of the birds, who preferred that vain, gaudy, fooliſh, bird, the *peacock*, to the eagle, in their choice of a king. The word *paddock*, afterwards introduced by Hamlet in the ſcene with his mother, I think proves nothing. To inforce his argument of her guilt, and to diſplay the deformity as well as abſurdity of her conduct, he *there* compares his uncle to the moſt diſagreeable and diſpleaſing object in nature.

GUILDENSTERN.

If my duty be too bold, my love is too unmannerly.

This anſwer to Hamlet's queſtion, of 'Why do you go about to recover the wind of me!' which is not, in my opinion, ludicrous, but objurgative,

jurgative, (for he keeps no meaſures with his old ſchool-fellows,) ſeems to include a ſort of reproach. 'If, in delivering the meſſage of the King and Queen, I have ſhewn too great boldneſs, my reſpect to you, in ſtanding out of the way, that you might with more eaſe receive the flute, will certainly be interpreted ill manners.' And here I am glad to find my opinion partly confirmed by Mr. Tyrrwhit. But the movement of Guildenſtern appeared, to Hamlet, as inſidious as the conduct of theſe courtiers in the ſecond act, when one of them, inſtead of anſwering a queſtion directly, ſays to the other, *What ſay you?* which is as much as to ſay, 'Shall I ſpeak the truth, or tell a lie?'

KING.

For we will fetters put about this *fear*.

Fear is here perſonified, as in Homer, when *it* is made the concomitant of other terrible companions of war.

There is, in the Maid's Tragedy, a paſſage, where the unhappy Aſpaſia gives directions to Antiphila to weave, in needlework, a ſtorm and ſhipwreck; in which the word *fear* is beautifully perſonified, and to be underſtood much in the ſame ſenſe as in Hamlet:

——— In this place work a quickſand;
And, over it, a ſhallow ſmiling water,
And his ſhip ploughing it. And then a *fear*:
Do that *fear* to the life, wench.

MAID'S TRAGEDY, Act II.

IDEM.

Oh! my offence is rank!

The

The King is juſt come from the repreſentation of the play; where he has been ſtruck with compunction from viewing the ſame act repreſented on the ſcene which he had himſelf committed. His coming on with the two courtiers, and the interruption of Polonius, are aukward incumbrances to his ſituation, and I think unneceſſary, as the ſending Hamlet to England had been determined by the King in a preceding ſcene, and Polonius had already told his maſter he would be attentive to what paſſed between Hamlet and his mother.

Notwithſtanding this admirable ſoliloquy of the King deſcribes the ſtruggles of conſcience without contrition, and a dread of future puniſhment without remorſe or penitence, and which, in my opinion, requires a very judicious ſpeaker, yet the part of the King appears ſo odious, that the principal actors generally ſhun it, as the repreſentation of a low and inſidious villain, who wants to ſupport his aſſumed rank with dignity and maintain his uſurpation by courage. Yet there are ſome ſituations of Claudius worthy the attention of an actor. His behaviour during the acting of the play before him, and the evident ſigns of guilt which he ought to ſhew in his countenance, require a ſkilful exhibition of conſcious terror. Whoever is able to do juſtice to the ſentiments of this ſoliloquy, and paint the horror of guilt reſulting from the dread of a future reckoning, will be amply rewarded by his auditors.

Some eminent actors, ſuch as Keen, Quin, and Hulet, have not diſdained to repreſent this character. When Ryan, at Lincoln's-inn-fields theatre, appeared in Hamlet, to give ſtrength to the play, Quin and Walker acted the inferior

part

parts of the King and Horatio, and retained them from 1719 to 1734.

HAMLET.

And how his audit ſtands, who knows ſave heaven?

Hamlet was now confirmed, (by that proof on which he moſt relied, the ſigns of guilt in the King's behaviour at the play,) that the viſion he had ſeen was no devil.—Of this he is well ſatisfied; For he ſays he will

Take the Ghoſt's word for a thouſand pounds.

That the author ſhould now make him forget what the Ghoſt had related to him, of his confinement in purgatory, is a little ſurpriſing. The whoſe ſoliloquy is more reprehenſible, perhaps, than any part of Shakſpeare's works. The deferring the puniſhment of the King at his devotions, leſt his ſoul ſhould go to heaven, is not only ſhocking, but highly improbable; and is, beſides, a poor contrivance to delay the cataſtrophe to the laſt act. The firſt actor, who rejected this ſoliloquy, was Mr. Garrick.

IDEM.

How now? a *rat!* dead for a ducket, dead.

This line has given occaſion to an abſurd charge of Voltaire againſt this tragedy.—'Hamlet,' ſays this writer, 'kills the father of his miſtreſs, on ſuppoſition that it was a *rat* which he deſtroyed.' Had he read the play, or underſtood the text if he had read it, he would have known, that Hamlet imagined the perſon he had killed was the King himſelf. But this is not the only error into which this great man has fallen reſpecting this play: The aſſumed madneſs of Hamlet he calls real: *Hamlet y devient*

y devient fou dans la ſeconde acte. The King, Queen, and Hamlet, drink together on the ſtage. The actors ſing together, quarrel, and fight. It is ſomewhat ſurpriſing, that a man, who had been ſeveral years in England, and had written letters in our language, could be ſo groſsly miſtaken. To ſuppoſe him the inventor of theſe falſe criminations would be to degrade genius too much. Mrs. Montague has, by an incomparable defence of our author, defeated the weak attempts, of this envious but brilliant Frenchman, to blaſt the laurels of our great poet.

QUEEN.

As kill a king?

I cannot, with Mr. Steevens, ſuppoſe this interrogation of the Queen as a hint to the auditors that ſhe had no concern in the murder of her huſband. The words are abſolutely equivocal, and may be a proof of her guilt as well as her innocence. The Ghoſt had charged her with being won to the luſt of his brother and murderer; there he ſtopped, and, with the moſt pathetic tenderneſs, cautions Hamlet not to think of puniſhing his mother, but to leave her to heaven and her conſcience. But there is one paſſage, in the play acted before the King and Queen, which brings the guilt of murder home to Hamlet's mother. The Player-Queen ſays, among other profeſſions of inviolable conſtancy——

In ſecond huſband let me be accurſt!
None wed the ſecond but who kill'd the firſt!

Theſe lines we may ſuppoſe to be put into the old fable, by Hamlet, on purpoſe to probe the mind of the Queen; and his immediate reflection on her behaviour plainly proves that they ſtung her to the quick: 'That's wormwood!'

HAMLET.

HAMLET.

——— Takes off the roſe
From the fair *forehead* of an innocent love,
And ſets a bliſter there.

I cannot think this paſſage requires the long and learned note of Mr. Steevens, without which it may very eaſily be explained.

'This infamous act,' ſays Hamlet, 'deprives the countenance of that modeſt hue or roſy bluſh, which becomes the chaſte and virtuous matron; and it places or fixes there a brand of infamy.' The *forehead*, in this place, ſtands, *as frons* does in Latin, for the *countenance*. *Fronti nulla fides.*

IDEM.

——— Senſe ſure you have,
Elſe could you not have motion.

Motion depends on the will of the perſon *who* moves. This is ſufficient to juſtify the old reading; the loweſt degree of animal ſenſe is motion, and therefore properly applied to one who is accuſed of having neither ſight or judgment.

IDEM.

——— Such a deed
As from the body of contraction plucks
The very ſoul!

'A deed which is like ſeparating the ſoul from the body, and diſſolves that contract which religion and law intended to render indiſſoluble.'

——— Heaven's face doth glow:
Yea, this ſolidity and compound maſs,
With triſtful viſage, as againſt the doom,
Is thought-ſick at the act!

'A deed

'A deed ſo horrid, that it ſeemed to forerun ıe day of judgment, and earth itſelf to ſympaıiſe and feel a ſenſibility on the occaſion.' Milton, ho was a great admirer of our poet, from theſe nes might impoſſibly be indebted to Shakſpeare for ıat ſublime paſſage of the earth's ſympathiſing ıith Adam and Eve when they ate the forbidden ruit:

Earth felt the wound; and nature, from her ſeat,
Sighing through all her works, gave ſigns of woe
That all was loſt!

PARADISE LOST, Book IX.

IDEM.

Look upon this picture and on this.

It has been the conſtant practice of the ſtage, ever ſince the Reſtoration, for Hamlet, in this ſcene, to produce from his pocket two pictures in little, of his father and uncle, not much bigger than two large coins or medallions. How the graceful attitude of a man could be given in miniature I cannot conceive.—In the infancy of the ſtage, we know that our theatres had no moving ſcenes; nor were they acquainted with them till Betterton brought ſome from Paris, 1662.—In our author's time they made uſe of tapeſtry; and the figures in tapeſtry might be of ſervice to the action of the player in the ſcene between Hamlet and the Queen. 'But,' ſays Downs, 'Sir William Davenant taught the players the repreſentation of Hamlet as he had ſeen it before the civil wars.' But, if the ſcantineſs of decorations compelled the old actors to have recourſe to miniature-pictures, why ſhould the playhouſe continue the practice when it is no longer neceſſary: when the ſcene might be ſhewn to more advantage by two portraits, at length, in different pannels

nels of the Queen's cloſet? Dr. Armſtrong in his ſketches, long ago pointed out the ſuppoſed abſurdity of theſe hand-pictures. The other mode, of large portraits, would add to the graceful action of the player, in pointing at the figures in the wainſcot. He might reſume the chair immediately after he had done with the ſubject, and go on with the expoſtulation. However this is only a conjecture which I throw out for the conſideration of the actors.

IDEM.

Save me and hover o'er me with your wings,
You heavenly guards!

At the appearance of the Ghoſt, in this ſcene, Hamlet immediately riſes from his ſeat affrighted; at the ſame time he contrives to kick down his chair, which, by making a ſudden noiſe, it was imagined would contribute to the perturbation and terror of the incident. But this, in my opinion, is a poor ſtage-trick, and ſhould be avoided; it tends to make the actor ſolicitous about a trifle, when more important matter demands his attention.

GHOST.

Oh! ſtep between her and her fighting ſoul.

Here, as in the firſt act, our author makes the viſion overflow with tenderneſs and ſenſibility for his unhappy Queen. Shakſpeare every where ſhews a genuine reſpect for the fair ſex throughout all his works. In thirty-five plays, which are all that can honeſtly be attributed to him, there are not above ſix or ſeven vicious characters of women. I have, in the life of Maſſinger, obſerved, that he likewiſe dwells with uncommon pleaſure on the perfections of the beautiful part of the creation,

tion; and that his numbers flow with ſurpriſing harmony whenever they are the ſubject.

HAMLET.

My father, in his habit as he liv'd!

A warlike king, ſuch as we are told old Hamlet was, would be dreſſed as often in armour as in any other habit. The Queen muſt have often ſeen him in a military garb; therefore there is no need of Mr. Steevens's new pointing of the line.

IDEM.

And; when you are deſirous to be bleſs'd;
I'll bleſſing beg of you.

That is: 'When I perceive in you the true ſigns of Penitence, I ſhall then, and not till then, deſire your prayers for me.'

IDEM.

Unpeg the baſket on the houſe's top;
Let the birds fly, and, like the famous ape,
To try concluſions, in the baſket creep;
And break your neck down.

Mr. Warner's note, referring to the ſtory of the jackanapes and the partridges, in a letter of Sir John Suckling, is by no means ſatisfactory. The author ſeems rather to allude to ſome well-known ſtory, or fable, of an ape, who, being near a baſket, in ſome tower, or high place, was curious to ſee what was in it; he contrived to open it; and, on ſeeing the birds which were in it fly away, to make experiment, whether he could not do the like, he crept into the baſket; and, by his weight, tumbled it down, and broke his neck.

But, let the ſtory be as it will, the meaning of the paſſage ſeems plainly to be this: 'Be not, mother,

ther, induced, by any means, to betray my ſimulation of madneſs to my uncle; if you do, he will not only put an end to my life, but he will, from his guilty ſuſpicions, treat you as an accomplice.'

IDEM.

——————— They muſt ſweep my way,
And marſhal me to knavery.

'Theſe men muſt be the uſhers to ſome vile knavery of my uncle, which will bring on my ruin.' What is farther ſaid, in this place, of Hamlet's juſt ſuſpicions of his ſchoolfellows, is preparative to his conduct as related in the fifth act.

This ſcene is one of the glories of the Engliſh ſtage; it may challenge a competition with any thing of the kind produced by *haughty Greece or inſolent Rome.*

France, in fifty years after the firſt acting of this play, could not boaſt of a compoſition ſo highly finiſhed. In the firſt interview between Hamlet and the Ghoſt, the terrible graces are ſuperior to the tender; in this, the latter bear away the palm, though it is not abſolutely deficient in the former. The argument, in favour of the nuptial bond and againſt adultery, is conducted with equal force and addreſs. The contraſt, between old Hamlet and his brother Claudius, is inimitably touched.—But I ſhall not dwell upon excellences which could not have eſcaped any obſerver.

How Taylor, the original Hamlet, performed it, we can have no trace or idea, except from what Downs has given, in his Roſcius Anglicanus, which amounts to no more than that Betterton acted it wonderfully from the leſſons of Sir William Davenant, who had ſeen and remembered Taylor.

Hamlet

Hamlet was eſteemed, it is ſaid by the ſame writer, the maſterpiece of Betterton. Downs is juſtified, in this information, by the concurrent teſtimony of his contemporaries, and eſpecially Sir Richard Steele and Colley Cibber. I have ſeen a pamphlet, written, above forty years ſince, by an intelligent man, who greatly extols the performance of Betterton in this laſt ſcene, commonly called the cloſet-ſcene.

If Addiſon and Cibber juſtly blamed Wilks, for his behaviour to the Ghoſt in the firſt act, they could not poſſibly cenſure his conduct with his mother in the third. His action was indeed a happy mixture of warm indignation, tempered with the moſt affecting tenderneſs. His whole deportment was princely and graceful: when he preſented the pictures, the reproaches his animation produced were guarded with filial reluctance; and, when he came to that pathetic expoſtulation, of

Mother, for love of grace!

there was ſomething in his manner inexpreſſibly gentle and powerfully perſuaſive.

To Wilks Milward ſucceeded. All the ſurviving ſpectators of Milward's Prince of Denmark will be pleaſed to have him recalled to their memory; for, in his firſt interview with the Ghoſt, and in this cloſet-ſcene, he was not only an agreeable, but a ſkilful, actor: his voice was full and muſical; and, in this character, he ſeemed to forget that love of ranting, which was his ſingular fault, or, as Shakſpeare would expreſs it, his *dram of baſe* in *acting*.—— Hamlet was the laſt part poor Milward was announced for in the bills; on his ſudden illneſs, The. Cibber undertook to read it.

What-

Whatever deficiencies might be obſerved in Wilks and Milward, they were amply ſupplied by the genius of Garrick. Here he had an ample field to diſplay that fine expreſſion of countenance, energy of ſpeech, and warmth of paſſion, for which he was ſo juſtly admired. To argumentative reproof he gave full vigour; nor was he deficient in thoſe filial regards which a ſon ſhould feel for a mother unhappily miſled. His addreſs to the Ghoſt was reverentially awful, as well as tranſcendently moving. His eye, marked with grief and filial love, purſued the melancholy ſhade to his exit. His recovery from that ſituation was characteriſtically ſtriking, and his final exhortation to his mother ardent and pathetic. Except in the delicacy of addreſs to a lady, in which Wilks and Barry excelled all mortals, Garrick was, in this ſcene, a moſt perfect Hamlet.

Mr. Sheridan, in ſeveral ſituations of Hamlet's character, was original, and different from all of his own time, who had preceded him. The applauſe, conferred on him by many brilliant audiences, will be an authentic teſtimony of his merit.

Hamlet was not Barry's moſt happy effort in acting; but, in this ſcene, he certainly was very pleaſing and affecting.

Mr. Smith's endeavours to pleaſe, in Hamlet, were crowned with ſucceſs. He modeſtly contented himſelf with following the inſtructions of his great maſter, Mr. Garrick; and was always heard with reſpect and attention.

I have already mentioned Mr. Henderſon with that juſt praiſe which his great merit deſerves. He is accounted, by the critics, one of the moſt correct and judicious ſpeakers on the ſtage. His third-

third-act ſcene, in Hamlet, is not only judicious, but pathetic.

The part of Hamlet's Mother is a character of dignity, not without a mixture of paſſion. Though, of late, our principal actreſſes have rejected Queen Gertrude, yet the ſkill of a good performer is requiſite to fill up many of her theatric ſituations with propriety. Without a proper ſupport from the Queen, Hamlet's action, in the laſt ſcene of the third act, would loſe half its force. Lady Slingſby, an actreſs of merit, was the firſt Hamlet's Mother, I think, ſince the Reſtoration, when Mrs. Betterton acted Ophelia. Mrs. Porter was the Queen-mother of Wilks, and Mrs. Hallam of Ryan.

The excellent performance of this part by Mrs. Pritchard will be the longer remembered, ſince, as I have obſerved, the preſent eminent tragic actreſſes reject the part, as if it were beneath them. The univerſal applauſe ſhe commanded, in this great interview with her ſon, was thought by her a ſufficient compenſation for going through various attitudes of leſs conſequence.

Mrs. Pritchard's attention to all the leſs, and ſeemingly unimportant, buſineſs of the Queen, was ſo exact, that Hamlet's Mother was eſteemed one of her prime characters. Mrs. Porter, though a greater actreſs in tragedy, did not excel her in Gertrude.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXXVIII.

The King is with the body, &c. *explained.—Fortinbras and Hamlet.*—Market of Man's time.—*Slight affronts resented.—Falkland island.—Lucian's Speculantes.—Hugger-mugger.—Keen's majesty.—Case of Ophelia.—Mrs. Cibber.—Mrs. Betterton.—Mrs. Booth and Mrs. Clive.—Character of Laertes;—closeted by the King.—The Grave-diggers defended, and Voltaire censured.—Reflections on Yorick's skull.—Foote.—Clod, the famous court-fool.—Q. Elizabeth, Archbishop Whitgift, and Dean Perne.—Cabe Underhill.—His character.—Last part.—Jonson, the actor; originally a painter.—Yates.—Jemmy Robertson, of York.—Hamlet's behaviour to Rosencraus and Guildenstern.—Passive obedience.—Ostrick characterized.—Hamlet a liar.—Laertes base.*—Fat and scant of breath.—*Hamlet defended against the attacks of Mr. Steevens.—Garrick's alteration of Hamlet.—The Grave diggers restored.—Short character of the play.—Mr. Kemble.—Inferior parts in Hamlet.*

Act IV.

Hamlet, Rosencraus, Guildenstern.

HAMLET.

The body is with the King, but the King is not with the body.

HAMLET, it should be observed, seizes every opportunity to speak contemptuously of his uncle; and here he readily embraces it, with a witty

witty and ſarcaſtic turn of expreſſion. I cannot think Mr. Steevens's explanation of this paſſage happy. Hamlet turns quickly, from the body of Polonius, to a ſevere and pointed reproach on the King: 'My uncle,' ſays he, 'I grant you, has the *body*, the outſide ſhow and pageantry, of a monarch; but he wants the dignity and virtues which conſtitute true royalty.' What he ſays, a little after, by calling the King 'a thing of nothing,' confirms me in my opinion.

HAMLET.

A thing of nothing.

'A thing of nothing,' or a matter of no value, is an expreſſion ſo common to all times, and, I believe, to all languages, that Mr. Steevens might have ſpared himſelf the trouble of quoting half a dozen authorities, from plays, to authenticate it.

IDEM.

I ſee a cherub that ſees them.

'I ſee a ſpirit that looks into the bottom of your purpoſe in ſending me to England.'

Scene IV.

HAMLET.

Good ſir, whoſe powers are theſe?

This ſcene, which contains much excellent matter, after having been for a long time diſuſed, was reſtored to the ſtage by Mr. Thomas Sheridan.

FORTINBRAS.

Claims the conveyance of a promis'd march
Over his kingdom.

That

That is: 'Tell the King, that we now claim the performance of his promiſe; which is, leave to march, unmoleſted, an army through his dominions.'

HAMLET.

Two thouſand ſouls and twenty thouſand ducats
Will not debate the queſtion of this ſtraw.

That is: 'The contention, about this ſmall ſpot of ground, will not be ſettled without a large expence of blood and treaſure.'

IDEM.

——— What is man,
If his chief good and *market of his time*
Be but to ſleep and feed?

'Market of his time' means the *chief end of his being.*

Mr. Addiſon, in his Cato, has improved the thought:

——— But what is life?
'Tis not to ſtalk about, and draw freſh air,
From time to time, and gaze upon the ſun.

IDEM.

Such large *diſcourſe.*

Diſcourſe is, perhaps, from the Italian, *diſcurſo.*

IDEM.

——— Rightly to be great,
Is not to ſtir without great argument;
But greatly to find quarrel in a ſtraw,
When honour's at the ſtake.

The ſlighteſt affront, given with a formed intention to inſult and provoke, has been ever held a ſufficient

ſufficient cauſe of reſentment.—A caſe in point is the behaviour of the Spaniards to the Engliſh on Falkland-iſland.

IDEM.

——————— Fight for a ſpot
Whereon the numbers cannot try the cauſe.

Something like this we read in that admirable Dialogue of Lucian, between Mercury and Charon, called Speculantes. 'See,' ſays Mercury to Charon, 'thoſe Argives and Lacedemonians fighting together, and their half-dead general inſcribing a trophy with his blood.'—'What do they fight for?' aſks Charon.—'Why, for the little ſpot of ground on which they ſtand!'

Scene V.

HORATIO.

Her mood will needs be pitied.

'Her inſanity demands compaſſion and relief.'

KING.

——————— We have done but greenly,
In *hugger-mugger* to inter him.

Dr. Johnſon deſerves commendation for reſtoring the old text of *hugger-mugger*, inſtead of *in private*; but ſurely Mr. Steevens need not have enlarged the margin of the volume, by producing four or five authorities, from old authors, for a word that is ſtill in uſe amongſt the common people.

GENTLEMAN.

The ratifiers and props of every *word*.

The explanation of this line, by Dr. Warburton, who connects it with the two preceding lines, ſeems preferable to any other. The word *ward* is taken from the diviſion of a city into *wards* or *diſtricts* of government.

KING.

——— Do not fear our perſon:
There's ſuch divinity doth hedge a king,
That treaſon dares not peep at what it would.

To the action of Keen was given the epithet *majeſtic*. In perſon he was tall and athletic: Lu. Du Guernier, in his picture to Addiſon's Cato, has ſo repreſented him.——When he ſpoke theſe lines, ſo commanding were his look and whole deportment, the audience accompanied them always with the loudeſt applauſe.

LAERTES.

Nature is fine in love; and, where 'tis ſo,
It ſends ſome precious inſtance of itſelf
After the thing it loves.

Ophelia's caſe was very diſtreſsful.—Her love to Hamlet had the ſanction of Polonius, with the approbation of the King and Queen. The lover, by miſtake, kills the father. This bar, to union with the man ſhe loved, could not be removed. Madneſs was the natural conſequence.—Dr. Johnſon's explanation of the paſſage above cited is very elegant; but the doctrine it inculcates is, that love refines our natures. So Iago to Roderigo, in Othello, 'If thou be'ſt valiant, as they ſay, baſe men, being in love, have then a nobility in their natures more than is native to them.'

OPHELIA.

There's *rue* for you.

In preſenting *rue* to the Queen, Mrs. Cibber pronounced the word *rue* with a particular emphaſis, and at the ſame time looked at her with great expreſſion.

OPHELIA.

Your may wear your rue with a difference.

The meaning I take to be this: 'Your majeſty had cauſe, indeed, to mourn for one huſband's death; but, ſince you have married another, you may mix ſorrow and gladneſs together emblematically.'

Till the ſweet character of Ophelia was perſonated by Mrs. Cibber, it was not well underſtood, at leaſt for theſe laſt ſixty years.——Mrs. Betterton, ſays Colley Cibber, was much celebrated for her action in Shakſpeare's plays, and Sir William Davenant gave her ſuch an idea of it as he could catch from the boy-Ophelias he had ſeen before the civil wars.—Mrs. Booth's figure, voice, and deportment, in this part, raiſed, in the minds of the ſpectators, an amiable picture of an innocent, unhappy, maid: but ſhe went no farther. Of Mrs. Clive's Ophelia I ſhall only ſay, that I regret that the firſt comic actreſs in the world ſhould ſo far miſtake her talents as to undertake it.

I cannot agree, with an excellent obſerver, that the diſtracted Ophelia is a perſonage of inſenſibility. She rather reſembles that to which ſhe compares Hamlet's madneſs, 'ſweet bells out of tune:' the ſound is ſtill preſerved in them, though

irregularly played upon. It is rather, I think, ſenſibility deranged, and deſerted by reaſon. She ſeems, at times, to recollect her ſcattered ſenſes: and throws out, though diſorderly, truths, ſolemn and affecting, in the moſt pathetic expreſſion.

OPHELIA.

Lord! we know what we are, but we cannot tell what we ſhall be.

No eloquence can paint the diſtreſſed and diſtracted look of Mrs. Cibber, while ſhe uttered this ſentence.

No actreſs has hitherto revived the idea of Mrs. Cibber's Ophelia, except Mrs. Baddeley; whoſe pleaſing ſenſibility, melodious voice, and correſpondent action, made us leſs regret the great actreſs in this part.

LAERTES.

And for the purpoſe I'll anoint my ſword.

This unexpected change of diſpoſition in Laertes muſt have ſtruck every reader of the play. A young man of high breeding, with a noble ſenſe of honour, who, from the warmth of filial piety, was ready to take arms againſt his ſovereign, on a ſudden becomes a confederate with a vile plotter to deſtroy a prince. Shakſpeare is generally ſuch a complete maſter of nature, and ſo faithful a delineator of character, that we muſt not haſtily condemn him. I am afraid he has truſted more than he ought to the readers or ſpectators ſagacity.

Laertes had been cloſeted by the uſurper, who had doubtleſs thrown as much odium as he could upon his nephew; he would not inform him that Hamlet had by chance or miſtake put an end to his

his father's life, but rather that he had diſpatched him by an act of violence or treachery. How far this ſuppoſition may juſtify our author I know not; but ſurely, if he had produced, on the ſtage, ſuch a converſation between the King and Laertes as I have ſuggeſted, it would perhaps have alleviated the guilt of the latter.

The fourth act of Hamlet has been cenſured, by ſome critics, as much inferior to the three preceding acts. If we ſhould grant that, yet it is certainly not without its merit. Laertes, whom Polonius and the King had given leave to travel to France in the firſt act, returns in the fourth; and, finding his father dead, and no authentic relation to be obtained in what manner he died, from a ſpirit of reſentment, he raiſes a tumult in the palace.——The madneſs of Ophelia is a beautiful dramatic incident, and will alone make that part of the play very intereſting.——Laertes is at firſt raſh and violent; and ſoon after becomes an aſſociate in villainous practices, for which I have endeavoured, in ſome ſort, to account. The act cloſes with an affecting relation of Ophelia's death, which contributes to the fixing Laertes in his reſolution to deſtroy Hamlet by any means.

Act V.

The Grave-diggers.

The making a grave upon the ſtage, and the dialogue of the Grave-diggers, Voltaire cenſures as the moſt abſurd violation of all dramatic rules. And indeed, were the ſcene to be weighed in Ariſtotle's ſcales, or finally diſcuſſed by the French writers, who are always chewing the huſks of the Greek

Greek and Roman critics, much could not be ſaid in behalf of our author. But Shakſpeare was a man to whom Ariſtotle would have fallen down and worſhipped, as the author of the Eſſay on Falſtaff has pleaſantly ſaid.

Candid foreigners will be pleaſed to reflect, that, when this man wrote, the Engliſh ſtage was in its infancy; that plays, written according to time, place, and action, were then almoſt unknown; and writers, who had the ſkill to combine the unities, had little elſe to recommend them to their audiences.

The *medium*, through which human wit and moral truth are to be conveyed, is ſurely not to be ſo much conſidered as theſe qualities themſelves. To ſee a grave opened, and the ſculps, of thoſe who had been buried in the church-yard, thrown wantonly about, muſt excite reflections to abate our pride and ſtrengthen our humanity. This doctrine Hamlet himſelf holds forth to us: 'Did theſe bones coſt no more than to play at loggats with them? Mine ache to think of them.'

The moral and pathetic reflections, on the ſkull of Yorick, are, in my opinion, a compenſation for all the oddities, or, if the critics pleaſe, the abſurdities, of this extraordinary ſcene. Should it be poſſible, ſome twenty years hence, for an acquaintance to diſcover the ſkull of an eminent wit, who had, like Yorick, 'ſet the table in a roar;' —a *Foote, perhaps*;—would not ſome ſuch ſentiments, as thoſe uttered by Hamlet on the king's jeſter, find their way from the mind of the obſerver? How would he moraliſe, and compare preſent deformity with paſt gaiety!

It is very probable, that the Yorick here deſcribed was one of the court-fools hired to divert the

the leiſure-hours of Queen Elizabeth. And it is moſt likely that our author celebrates the famous Clod, who died ſome time before the acceſſion of K. James.

Clod was a clown of uncommon wit and ready obſervation. Fuller records a jeſt of his, which, it was ſaid, proved fatal to Dean Perne, who, in the ſpace of twelve years, had changed his religion four times. Queen Elizabeth, in company with Archbiſhop Whitgift, Dean Perne, and her jeſter, Clod, was deſirous to go abroad on a wet day. Clod uſed the following argument to prevent her majeſty from going out: 'Heaven,' ſays he, 'madam, diſſuades you, for it is cold and wet; and earth diſſuades you, for it is moiſt and dirty. Heaven diſſuades you, too, by this heavenly man, Archbiſhop Whitgift; and earth diſſuades you,—your fool, Clod, ſuch a lump of clay as myſelf. And, if neither will prevail with you, *here is one that is neither heaven nor earth, but hangs between both*,—Dr. Perne; and he alſo diſſuades you.'

Auguſtine Sly, Tarleton, Kempe, or ſome old actor of the comic caſt, was the original Grave-digger. Cabe Underhill, a comedian, whom Sir William Davenant pronounced to be one of the trueſt players for humour he ever ſaw, acted this part forty years ſucceſſively. Underhill was a jolly and droll companion, who divided his gay hours between Bacchus and Venus with no little ardour; if we may believe ſuch hiſtorians as Tom Brown. Tom, I think, makes Underhill one of the gill-drinkers of his time; men who reſorted to taverns, in the middle of the day, under pretence of drinking Briſtol milk (for ſo good ſherry was then called) to whet their appetites, where they indulged themſelves too often in ebriety. Underhill acted

acted till he was past eighty. He was so excellent in the part of Trinculo, in the Tempest, that he was called Prince Trinculo. He had an admirable vein of pleasantry, and told his lively stories, says Brown, with a bewitching smile. The same author says, he was so afflicted with the gout, that he prayed one minute and cursed the other. His shambling gait in his old age, was no hindrance to his acting particular parts. He retired from the theatre in 1703. Some years before he died, he solicited a benefit, which was recommended to the public by the kind-hearted Steele. The part he chose was the Grave-digger in Hamlet; but Cabe was so unlike his former self, that he appeared the ghost of what he had been, and was dismissed with compassion. Colley Cibber, who, in his admirable account of the old actors, has spoken at large of Underhill's merits, says he died, about four or five years afterwards, a pensioner of Sir Richard Steele and the players who obtained a patent from George I.

That chaste copier of nature, B. Jonson, the comedian, for above forty years, gave a true picture of an arch clown in the Grave-digger. His jokes and repartees had a strong effect from his seeming insensibility of their force. His large speaking blue eyes he fixed steadily on the person to whom he spoke, and was never known to have wandered from the stage to any part of the theatre. Jonson was the Hemskirk or D. Teniers of the theatre; the honest Dutch painter who contents himself with giving a portrait of mere nature. I should have observed, that Jonson was originally a painter by profession.

Next to this excellent man, Mr. Yates must be placed. In manner they strongly resembled each other.

other. They were diſciples of the ſame ſchool.—Nature was their guide, and to her alone they paid their devotion.

Parſons and Quick are actors born to relax the muſcles and ſet mankind a tittering. They are equally happy in the Grave-digger, but with more heightening than the two former. Edwin is chaſter in his outline than both, for he does not colour ſo warmly.

To rank a country actor with theſe gentlemen of the eſtabliſhed London theatres may ſeem bold and unprecedented; but I am not afraid to name, among men of comic genius, Mr. James Robertſon, of York; a man, like Yorick, *of infinite wit and of moſt excellent fancy.* What gentleman, of the county of York, does not know Jemmy Robertſon? What critic ſo ſour as not to be pleaſed with his ſallies of humour, whether his own or faithfully given from his original author on the ſtage? His being a very pleaſing actor, and a lively companion, forms but a ſmall part of his character.—He is reſpected for merit of a more durable kind: for his honeſty, worth, and friendly diſpoſition.

Scene II.

Hamlet and Horatio.

HAMLET.

As our *ſtatiſts* do.

Mr. Steevens rightly obſerves, that *ſtatiſts* means *ſtateſmen.* Here alſo it comprehends all men of birth, rank, and faſhion; all fine gentlemen, who, from affectation, thought it an indignity to their quality to write a plain and legible hand.

IDEM.

Doth by their inſinuation grow.

Hamlet is here accounting for his behaviour to Roſencraus and Guildenſtern, whoſe fate, he ſays, was owing to their own conduct. If we ſhould not agree, with Dr. Warburton, that theſe men corruptly inſinuated themſelves into the ſervice of Hamlet, yet we muſt own that they were very ready and officious inſtruments of the King. And, although it does not appear, from the context, that they knew the contents of their commiſſion, 'to deſtroy the prince,' yet I believe the author puniſhes them, as well as Polonius, for being over buſy, and thruſting themſelves into any employment, without enquiring whether it was right or wrong, juſt or unjuſt. No time was more infamous, for groſs flattery to the prince, than the reigns of Elizabeth and of James I. This our author knew; and *this* was one *mark of the age and body of the time*, which his manly nature deſpiſed and wiſhed to remove.

IDEM.

——— Is't not to be damn'd,
To let this canker of our nature come
To farther evil?

That is, 'Would it not be an unpardonable crime, to ſuffer this villain, the deſtroyer of the human ſpecies, to proceed in his wickedneſs, and go on, unpuniſhed, from crime to crime?'

The advocates for paſſive and unlimited obedience will on no account permit reſiſtance to authority.—What?' you will ſay, 'on no account whatever?'—'O yes! in the caſe of lawful ſucceſſion, where that is interrupted by violence or treachery, as in the caſe of Hamlet: there, indeed, the

the uſurper may be deſtroyed, by ſuperior power or wily ſtratagem.'——So then, it ſeems, from this mode of arguing, that the intereſt of one man and his family is of more importance to ſociety than that of millions!

IDEM.

The more *fond* and winnowed opinions.

I think nothing can be more clear than that Shakſpeare means, by this expreſſion, that ſuch fellows as Oſtrick, by acquiring a little faſhionable jargon, with a conſiderable ſtock of impudence, contrive to paſs upon men of the moſt approved judgment, for complete courtiers.—To impoſe their trash upon *fond*, or *fooliſh*, people, could be no matter of ſurpriſe. It is very probable, that, inſtead of *fond*, the author wrote *found*.

IDEM.

Give me your pardon, ſir.

No part of this ſpeech of Hamlet ſhould be ſpoken but that which Mr. Steevens has reſtored, beginning with——

Sir, in this audience,——

and ſo to the end. To the reſt Hamlet gives the lie moſt ſhamefully.

LAERTES.

I am ſatisfied in nature.

Laertes determined to act treacherouſly, and therefore ſeems puzzled to return a proper anſwer to Hamlet's fair addreſs and noble apology. To that, I think, we muſt place his referring the matter in diſpute to able judges of affronts. His offering to receive his antagoniſt's proffered love as love,

and

and proteſting not to wrong it, is as infamous as Hamlet's attributing his violent behaviour at Ophelia's grave to his madneſs.

QUEEN.

He is fat and ſcant of breath.

In a note to this paſſage, Mr. Steevens ſays, that John Lowin, who was the original Falſtaff, was no leſs celebrated for his Henry VIII. and Hamlet. Mr. Steevens had forgotten, in a note of his on Henry IV. that Lowin had ever acted Falſtaff: for the letters *Old*, placed to a ſpeech of that character, he, rather than ſuppoſe it to ſtand for *Oldcaſtle*, which, I believe, was originally intended, would inſinuate, they might be the firſt letters of the actor's name who played Falſtaff: this it is to ſupport an hypotheſis at all events.—I believe that Betterton, who was an unlimited ſtage-genius, was the only actor that ever repreſented the three parts of Hamlet, Falſtaff, and Harry VIII. How Lowin could be ſaid to have acted Hamlet is ſomewhat ſurpriſing, as he was celebrated chiefly for parts of humour.* Taylor is generally allowed to be the original Hamlet; and, at the time theſe words, of 'fat and ſcant of breath,' were put in the Queen's mouth, he might have been plumper, in perſon, than the author wiſhed he ſhould be for the actor of young Hamlet.

LAERTES.

——— Mine and my father's death
Come not on thee.

Laertes

* That Lowin ſometimes acted tragic characters cannot be denied.—He played Domitian in the Roman Actor, and Aubrey in Rollo, when the actors were interrupted by the ſoldiers, at Holland-Houſe.

Laertes had juſtly purchaſed his own death by his treacherous conduct; Hamlet could have brought no guilt on his head on that ſcore. Had he ſaid, indeed,—

——— My father's and my ſiſter's death
Come not on thee, ———

he would have been more conſiſtent. Laertes is not a favourite with the audience or the actors.

HORATIO.

Now cracks a noble heart.

Hamlet is not a character for imitation; there are many features of it that are diſagreeable. Notwithſtanding his apparent blemiſhes, I do not think that he is ſo deformed as Mr. Steevens has repreſented him. Aaron Hill had, above forty years ago, in a paper called the Prompter, obſerved, that, beſides Hamlet's aſſumed inſanity, there was in him a melancholy, which bordered on madneſs, ariſing from his peculiar ſituation. But ſurely Hamlet did not come, as Mr. Steevens ſays, to diſturb the funeral of Ophelia; for, till Laertes called the dead body his ſiſter, he knew not whoſe grave was before him. Nor did he manifeſt the leaſt ſign of wrath, till Laertes beſtowed a more than tenfold curſe upon him. His jumping into the grave, when unexpectedly provoked, may be pardoned. Laertes ſeized him by the throat; and even then, inſtead of returning violence for violence, Hamlet begs him to deſiſt. The madneſs of Ophelia is no farther to be charged to his account than as the unhappy conſequence of a precipitant and miſtaken action.

It is evident that Hamlet conſidered Roſencraus and Guildenſtern as the King's accomplices and inſtruments; nor indeed can we abſolve them of that guilt

guilt. They were the cabinet-counſellors of a villain and a murderer; and, though they were ſtrangers to *all* his guilt, it is not improbable that they were acquainted with the ſecret of their commiſſion. They were witneſſes of the King's anxiety at and after the play which was acted before him; and, when he told them, *he liked him not*, they ſaw no apparent reaſon for his ſaying ſo, except Hamlet's behaviour at the play, which, however frolicſome it might be, was not ſurely wicked. Upon a mature inſpection of their conduct through the play, they muſt be ſtigmatiſed with the brand of willing ſpies upon a prince, their quondam ſchool-fellow, whoſe undoubted title to the crown they well knew, and of whoſe wrongs they had not any feeling. In ſhort, to ſum up their character in a few words, they were ready to comply with any command, provided they acquired, by their compliance, honour and advantage.

Mr. Garrick, about eight or nine years ſince, offered the public an amendment of Shakſpeare's Hamlet. The reſpect, which the public owed to ſo eminent a genius, diſpoſed them to receive his alterations favourably. The firſt act, which, in my opinion, the author's genius carries on with wonderful rapidity, he had obſerved was immoderately long; for this reaſon he divided it into two, the firſt ending with Hamlet's determined reſolution to watch, with Horatio and Marcellus, in expectation of ſeeing the ghoſt of his father. In conſequence of this arrangement, the old third act was extended to the fourth. Little or no change, in language or ſcenery, was attempted till the fifth act, in which Laertes arrives and Ophelia is diſtracted, as in the old play. The plotting-ſcenes, between the King and Laertes, to deſtroy Hamlet, were entirely changed,

changed, and the character of Laertes rendered more eſtimable. Hamlet, having eſcaped from Roſencraus and Guildenſtern, returns with a firm reſolution to avenge the death of his father. The Grave-diggers were abſolutely thrown out of the play. The audience were not informed of the fate of Ophelia; and the Queen, inſtead of being poiſoned on the ſtage, was led from her ſeat, and ſaid to be in a ſtate of inſanity, owing to her ſenſe of guilt. When Hamlet attacks the King, he draws his ſword and defends himſelf, and is killed in the rencounter. Laertes and Hamlet die of their mutual wounds.

To ſuch material changes, in this favourite tragedy, the audience ſubmitted during the life of the alterer; but they did not approve what they barely endured. The ſcenes and characters of Shakſpeare, with all their blemiſhes, will not bear radical or violent alteration. The author had drawn Claudius a coward, as well as a villain and uſurper; and this ſtrong check upon guilt and ſtigma upon wickedneſs ought by no means to be removed. Garrick, if I remember right, uſed to ſay, that, before his alteration of Hamlet, the King uſed to be ſtuck like a pig on the ſtage: but by giving the murderer courage, this great actor did not ſee that he leſſened the meanneſs of his character, which the author takes care to inculcate throughout the play. The brave villain, like Rich. III. we juſtly hate, but we cannot deſpiſe him. Why the fate of Ophelia ſhould be left uncertain, as well as that of the Queen, I cannot conceive. But the ſpectators of Hamlet would not part with their old friends, the Grave-diggers. The people ſoon called for Hamlet as it had been acted from time immemorial.

The

The dialogue of this tragedy approaches very near to the converſation of the preſent times. Many of the ſcenes diſplay wit as brilliant as that of Congreve, with the eaſe and familiarity of Vanbrugh. The argument is often profound, and the ſatire juſt and poignant. The Cid was not more a favourite with the French nation than Hamlet with ours. The great number of proverbial expreſſions, taken from Hamlet, which are brought into the ſenate, uttered at the bar, and retailed and applied in almoſt every company, is a certain proof, that this play has not only been acted more frequently than others, but that the ſentiments and maxims it contains have made a laſting impreſſion on its ſpectators. Dr Johnſon's general review, at the cloſe of his remarks on Hamlet, is accurate, elegant and inſtructive.

It is obvious to me, that Shakſpeare, in the celebrated ſoliloquy on a future ſtate, piouſly intended a diſſuaſive from ſelf-murder.

Since my remarks on this tragedy went to the preſs, I have ſeen a new Hamlet, in the perſon of Mr. Kemble, brother to Mrs. Siddons. I congratulate the public on the proſpect of much rational entertainment, from the joint efforts of two perſons of uncommon genius in the art which they profeſs.

Though, in drawing the outline of Hamlet, it was ſcarcely poſſible Mr. Kemble ſhould differ from preceding actors, yet his particular emphaſes, pauſes, and other novelties in acting, have ſurpriſed the public and divided the critics; ſome of whom greatly cenſure, while others as warmly extol, his peculiarities.

The audience will, in general, conſider every thing that is unuſual with a jealous eye, and perhaps with ſome reaſon; at the ſame time, men of candour

dour will reflect, that the judicious actor muſt have conſidered every material line of his part, every action and attitude, with more attention than the ſpectator can, who balances in his mind one player with another, and determines the merit of the performer more from compariſon than matúre deliberation.

If Booth and Garrick deſerved much praiſe for diſcovering beauties which had long lain hid, in ſome capital parts,—why ſhould not we encourage the induſtry of every young ſtage-adventurer, who, by a deep ſearch into character, finds out new methods of pleaſing, provided they are not inconſiſtent with the author's intention?

What the actor is chiefly to guard againſt, in this caſe, is too much refinement; to beware leſt a paſſion for novelty miſlead him into overſtrained niceties.

Mr. Kemble's pauſes are, I believe, very judicious, though to many they appeared long. The actor muſt take into the account the tone of the audience; for the rule of acting, in conformity to the rule of ſpeaking, muſt not contradict the general ſenſe. A player cannot, with ſafety to himſelf, affect to appear wiſer than his judges.

As I do not propoſe to go through an examen of Mr. Kemble's Hamlet, I ſhall add but little more on the ſubject.

In the impaſſioned ſcene, between Hamlet and his Mother, in the third act, Kemble's emphaſis and action, however different from thoſe of all former Hamlets we have ſeen, bore the genuine marks of ſolid judgment and exquiſite taſte. I never ſaw an audience more deeply affected, or more generouſly grateful to the actor who had ſo highly raiſed their paſſions.

Mr.

Mr. Kemble is tall and well made; his countenance expreſſive, his voice ſtrong and flexible, his action and deportment animated and graceful. His ſalutations are ſaid by ſome to be too much ſtudied, and, in the ſcene of fencing, too formal and ceremonious. I will not pretend to determine, whether trials of ſkill and the exerciſe with foils, between princes and men of high rank, and thoſe of inferior condition, are attended with the ſame forms; but ſhall obſerve, that, though we are taught our outward behaviour by the dancing-maſter, the ſalute and addreſs of the well-bred man will always diſtinguiſh him from his teacher.

As the managers of both theatres have ſeemed to try their ſtrength lately in the play of Hamlet, I ſhall take ſome notice of a few under parts in the play.—Horatio is an excellent character of friendſhip, and ſits very becomingly on my old acquaintance, Mr. Thomas Hull, the friend of Shenſtone and the approved ſpeaker of Maſon. Mr. Whitfield has lately ſucceeded Mr. Hull, at Covent-garden, in Horatio; and, in action and ſpeech is decently becoming. At Drury-lane, Mr. Farren, a young actor of merit, does juſtice to this amiable part. He does not endeavour to make more of his ſituations in the ſcene than he ought; he obſerves a proper ſubordination, and keeps in mind the advice of the poet, not to *o'erſtep the modeſty of nature*. The kingly behaviour of Clarke ſeems more important than the majeſty of Packer, who always ſpeaks ſenſe but not with ſufficient force. The Grave-diggers, Parſons and Quick, are admirably matched. Though I do not diſlike Mrs. Hopkins in the Queen, yet I would rather ſee her in Mrs. Heidelberg; her excellence is in comedy. Mrs. Inchbald's figure is pleaſing, and her judgment ſtronger than her power of utterance.

Dryden.

Dryden.

CHAP. XXXIX.

The Reſtoration opens the theatres.—King's and Duke of York's companies.—Shakſpeare leſs valued than Fletcher and Jonſon.—Heroic tragedy.—Dryden's defence of it.—Maximin's defiance of the gods.—Aurengzebe, Morat.—Kynaſton and Booth.—Celebrated lines on the viciſſitudes of life, with an anſwer.—Dryden forſakes riming tragedy.—His All for Love.—The true language of tragedy.—Troilus and Creſſida;—when revived.—Old authors cenſured.—Charles II. and his courtiers.—Buckingham, Rocheſter, and Dorſet.—Mermaid, the Devil, Roebuck, &c.—Beef-ſteak club.—John Beard.—Law company.—Mr. Wolſey and Rocheſter's Valentinian.—Poets compared.—Their characters of gentlemen.—Lazineſs or inability in dramatiſts.—Sir George Etheridge.—Dorimant.—Duke of Dorſet.—Jeremy Collier and Dryden.—Licentious language of tragedy.—Dryden's defence of himſelf.—His death.

SOON after the Reſtoration of Charles II. the doors of the theatres, which had been ſhut for twenty years, were thrown open. The king and the duke of York formed two ſeparate companies of comedians, who were honoured with the title of his majeſty's ſervants. The court directed the general taſte, and took the lead in all public diverſions, more eſpecially in the amuſements of the ſtage.

In looking over the fragment of Downes, I ſee little reſpect paid to Shakſpeare, much to Beaumont and Fletcher,

Fletcher, and ſtill more to Ben Jonſon, in proportion to the number of his plays. Hart and Mohun, the managers of the king's theatre, revived only three of Shakſpeare's plays; and Davenant, at the duke's houſe, about five. But, indeed, a regard for the plays of the laſt age, as they were then called, was ſwallowed up in a paſſion for new-fangled compoſitions. Heroic tragedies in rime, fraught with bombaſtic diction and extravagant ſentiment, and witty comedies, abounding with ſmart repartee and looſe action, were the immediate ſucceſſors of the old drama, which was founded on nature; where the dialogue was formed from genuine manners, the paſſions aroſe from character and incident, and the cataſtrophe was cloſed with an inſtructive moral. With much wit, and plauſible argument, Dryden has endeavoured to vindicate the unnatural flights of his Almanzor and Almahide, of Tyrannic Love, and others of his *riming* tragedies: but, whatever beauties of imagination, ſentiment, with harmony of numbers, they may contain, no man will ſit down to read them, at this day, without blending laughter and contempt with eſteem and admiration. Long quotations, to prove what is ſo generally known, would be impertinent. I ſhall content myſelf to produce a ſingular inſtance of ranting blaſphemy, for ſuch it was in the mouth of Maximin, from the laſt act of Tyrannic Love:

What had the gods to do with me or mine!
Did I moleſt your heaven!———
Why ſhould you, then, make Maximin your foe,
Who paid you tribute which he need not do!
Your altars I with ſmoke of gum did crown,
For which you lean'd your hungry noſtrils down;
All daily gaping for my incenſe there,
More than your ſun could draw you in a year.

And

And you for this theſe plagues on me have ſent:
But, by the gods,—by Maximin I meant,—
Henceforth I and my world
Hoſtility with you and yours declare:
Look to it, gods! for you th'aggreſſors are.
Keep you your rain and ſunſhine in your ſkies,
And I'll keep back my flame and ſacrifice.
Your trade of heav'n ſhall ſoon be at a ſtand,
And all your goods lie heavy on your hand.

An audience, who could bear ſuch rants as this, and reliſh the following ſcene with Placidius, who ſtabs the Emperor, and is, in his turn, ſtabbed by him, muſt have had a very particular taſte for bombaſt in words and abſurdity in action. Such auditors muſt have been very unqualified judges of Shakſpeare, Jonſon, and Fletcher.

Dryden's laſt and moſt perfect tragedy in rime was Aurengzebe. In this play, the paſſions are ſtrongly depicted, the characters well diſcriminated, and the diction more familiar and dramatic, than in any of his preceding pieces. Hart and Mohun greatly diſtinguiſhed themſelves in the characters of Aurengzebe and the old Emperor. Mrs. Marſhall was admired in Nourmahul; and Kynaſton has been much extolled, by Cibber, for his happy expreſſion of the arrogant and ſavage fierceneſs in Morat.——'Booth, in ſome part of this character,' ſays the ſame critical hiſtorian, 'was too tame, from an apprehenſion of raiſing the mirth of the audience improperly.'

Though I pay great deference to Cibber's judgment, yet I am not ſure whether Booth was not in the right. And I cannot help approving the anſwer, which this actor gave to one who told him he was ſurpriſed that he neglected to give a ſpirited turn to the paſſage in queſtion:

NOURMAHUL.

'Twill not be ſafe to let him live an hour.

MORAT.

I'll do't to ſhow my arbitrary power.

'Sir,' ſaid Booth, 'it was not through negligence, but by deſign, that I gave no ſpirit to that ludicrous bounce of Morat. I know very well, that a laugh of approbation may be obtained from the underſtanding few; but there is nothing more dangerous than exciting the laugh of ſimpletons, who know not where to ſtop. The majority is not the wiſeſt part of the audience; and, for that reaſon, I will run no hazard.'*

The court greatly encouraged the play of Aurengzebe. The author tells us, in his dedication, that Charles II. altered an incident in the plot, and pronounced it to be the beſt of all Dryden's tragedies. It was revived at Drury-lane, about the year 1726, with the public approbation: the old Emperor, Mills; Wilks, Aurengzebe; Booth, Morat; Indiana, Mrs. Oldfield; Nourmahul, Mrs. Porter; Meleſinda, the firſt wife of Theophilus Cibber, a very pleaſing actreſs, in perſon agreeable, and in private life unblemiſhed. She died in 1733.

In this tragedy, Aurengzebe's complaint, of the viciſſitudes and diſappointments of life, is forcibly deſcribed and beautifully varied. It is ſtill repeated by all lovers of poetry:

When I conſider life, 'tis all a cheat;
Yet, fool'd with hope, men favour the deceit;
Truſt on, in hopes tomorrow will repay:
Tomorrow's falſer than the former day;

Lies

* Life of Booth, by Th. Cibber.

Lies more; and, when it ſays we ſhall be bleſs'd
With ſome new joys, cuts off what we poſſeſs'd.
Strange cozenage! None would live paſt years again,
Yet all hope pleaſure from what yet remain;
And from the dregs of life hope to receive
What the firſt ſprightly runnings cannot give.
I'm tir'd with waiting for this chemic gold,
Which fools us young and beggars us when old!

In the judgment of Addiſon,* theſe are the beſt lines in the play. But the reply of Nourmahul, which contains a very full and pertinent anſwer to Aurengzebe, I never heard any body mention except Dr. Johnſon:

NOURMAHUL.

'Tis not for nothing that we life purſue;
It pays our hopes with ſomething that is new.
Each day's a miſtreſs unenjoy'd before;
Like travellers, we are pleas'd with ſeeing more.
Did you but know what joys your way attend,
You would not hurry to your journey's end.

But, notwithſtanding Dryden had exerted all his ſtrength to excel in this ſpecies of riming tragedy, and had defended it very ably in his excellent Eſſay on dramatic Poetry, he at laſt grew tired of his bells, and wiſhed to be a riming packhorſe no longer. This he confeſſes in the prologue to this very play:

But he has now another taſte of wit;
And, to confeſs a truth, though out of time,
Grows weary of his long-lov'd miſtreſs, rime.

Having ſeen, in all probability, thoſe eminent actors, Hart and Mohun, in the much-admired ſcene of contention in the fourth act of Julius Cæſar,

* Spectator.

Cæſar, he breaks out, in the ſame prologue, into a generous confeſſion of Shakſpeare's ſuperiority:

> But, ſpite of all his pride, a ſecret ſhame
> Invades his breaſt at Shakſpeare's ſacred name!
> And, when he hears his godlike Romans rage,
> He, in a juſt deſpair, would quit the ſtage,

Two years after Aurengzebe had been acted, Dryden brought to the ſtage his All for Love; which is, I think, the firſt play, after the Reſtoration, in which was revived the true dramatic ſtyle.

The ſcene between Antony and Ventidius, in the firſt act of this play, is written in ſuch colloquial language as might be ſpoken by the humbleſt and the moſt exalted characters:

ANTONY.

I would be private: leave me.

VENTIDIUS.

——— Sir, I love you,
And therefore will not leave you.

ANTONY.

——— Actium, Actium, oh!

VENTIDIUS.

It ſits too near you.

ANTONY.

Here, here, it lies! a lump of lead by day;
And, in my ſhort, diſtracted, nightly ſlumbers,
The hag that rides me in my dreams!

VENTIDIUS.

Out with it; give it vent.

ANTONY.

ANTONY.

——— ——— Urge not my ſhame.
I loſt a battle!

VENTIDIUS.

So has Julius done.

ANTONY.

Thou favour'ſt me, and ſpeak'ſt not half thou think'ſt:
For Julius fought it out, and loſt it fairly;
But Antony ———

VENTIDIUS.

——— Nay, ſtop not.

This is the true language of nature, and of ſuch paſſion as is congenial to the breaſt of every man. In this interview, of Antony and his General, the poet ſeems to have exhauſted his ſtrength: the reſt of the play, though not careleſsly written, is much inferior to this noble outſet.

In a year or two after, Dryden gave a freſh proof of his veneration for Shakſpeare, by reviving his Troilus and Creſſida with conſiderable alterations and improvements. The noble ſcene, between Troilus and Hector, in the third act, is the invention of the reviver, and written in emulation of the quarrel between Brutus and Caſſius in Julius Cæſar. This play was revived by Rich, at Covent-garden, in 1734. Walker acted Hector with his uſual ſpirit and animated action; Troilus fell to Ryan's ſhare; Quin was eſteemed an admirable Therſites; and Hippeſley excited much mirth in Pandarus. Mrs. Buchanan, a very fine

woman and a pleaſing actreſs, who died ſoon after in childbed, was the Creſſida. Mr. Lacy, late manager of Drury-lane, acted Agamemnon; and Tom Chapman pleaſed himſelf with the obſtreperous and diſcordant utterance of Diomed's paſſion for Creſſida.

Dryden, at the ſame time that he juſtified the new ſpecies of heroic plays in rime, boldly attacked the comedies of the former age. The poets, in the reigns of Elizabeth and James, were, it ſeems, very low in their humour, and dull and unrefined in their dialogue. They were not ſo witty and ſmart in their repartees as the dramatiſts of their own times. Nay, he boaſts that the ladies and gentlemen in his days ſpoke more wit in converſation than the old dramatiſts in their plays. This ſuperiority, in elegance of ſtyle, Dryden attributes to the influence of the court, and more particularly to the authority of Charles himſelf. The king had, indeed, by his exile, gained an education which few other princes could obtain. His misfortunes were, in this reſpect, of ſervice to him. By them he was obliged to converſe with different ranks of men; and this contributed to ſtore his mind with knowledge, and ſoften his manners. He was univerſally ſaid to be the beſt-bred man in his dominions. With ſcarcely any virtues, he had many amiable qualities; his affability and condeſcenſion were the charms, which, like a veil, covered the worſt part of his character. But Charles contributed, more than any of his courtiers, to plunge the nation into vice and profligacy. During his whole reign, of twenty-four years, the kingdom was in a ſtate of diſſipation and ebriety; from which neither the plague in

1665,

1665, nor the dreadful fire of London the year after, nor two diſaſtrous Dutch wars, with an unfortunate conſpiracy againſt the public tranquillity, called the popiſh plot, could rouſe them. The two choice favourites of Charles were the witty but infamous Duke of Buckingham, and the lively but abandoned Rocheſter. It is true, he courted the friendſhip of all the wits of his time, and particularly the amiable Lord Dorſet; but he, obſerving the king to have no real integrity or worth, honeſtly rejected the friendſhip of a man, whom, in his heart, he deſpiſed.

It is pleaſant to hear Dryden and others very gravely aſſure us, that it was utterly impoſſible that the characters of our old poets could talk like gentlemen, becauſe the authors themſelves kept low company. The Mermaid, the Devil, and the Boar, it ſeems, did not receive ſuch pleaſant and witty fellows, in the reign of Queen Beſs or of James I. as thoſe who frequented the Royal Oak, the Mitre, and the Roebuck, in the days of Charles II. Beaumont, who, I believe, was no ill judge of mirth and good company, in an epiſtle to Ben Jonſon, talks with rapture of the rich banquet of wit and admirable converſation which they had enjoyed at the Mermaid. Nor can I think ſo meanly of Ben Jonſon's club, at the Devil, as Dryden affects to do: that ſociety could never be contemptible which had Ben at the head of it, with Shakſpeare, Fletcher, and Beaumont, his aſſociates; who were occaſionally joined by Selden, Martin, Morley, afterwards Biſhop of Wincheſter, Edmund Waller, and others of equal eminence. The beef-ſteak club, with their jolly preſident, John Beard, is ſurely one of the moſt reſpectable aſſemblies of jovial and agreeable companions

panions in this metropolis; but I believe their good ſenſe will hinder them from claiming a monopoly of cheerfulneſs; they will not ſay that their predeceſſors were dull blockheads, becauſe they are dead, and they themſelves are alive and merry: *Vixere fortes ante Agamemnona.*

I have ſaid, that the two deareſt companions of Charles were Villiers Duke of Buckingham and Wilmot Earl of Rocheſter: the latter confeſſed, to Dr. Burnet, that, for five years ſucceſſively, he had been in a ſtate of ebriety; and the former, notwithſtanding his high rank in life and uncommon vein of wit, became at laſt ſo odious for his vices, that his company was at length as much ſhunned as it had been before ſought after and courted. In the preface to an edition of Valentinian, altered from Fletcher by Rocheſter, Mr. Wolſley, the editor, reproaches the original writer for keeping low company.—Could he poſſibly aſſociate with men of worſe principles, more debauched, and more meanly diſſipated, than his friend, the earl? Theſe bleſſed exemplars of courtly gallantry and faſhionable wit, to whom no man in his proper ſenſes could be a companion, were the bright meteors of a giddy age; and ſuch as Dryden would oppoſe to the inferior ſociety which Jonſon and Shakſpeare were reduced to the neceſſity of meeting. It is true, theſe antiquated men wanted that which the others enjoyed in a high degree, a reliſh for blaſphemy and profaneneſs,* with a ſovereign contempt for all order and decency. Of all their vices, ebriety ſeems to have been the moſt innocent.

The

* If the reader has an inclination to be acquainted with the wit and frolics of this ſort of gentlemen, let him turn to honeſt Anthony Wood's Diary of his Life, and read the hiſtory of a merry bout at the Cock in Bow-ſtreet: p. 187.

The beſt method, of trying the intrinſic merit of contending genius, is to compare the different compoſitions of each. Let me aſk, Whether the gentlemen, in the comedies of our old bards, Shakſpeare, Jonſon, and Fletcher, are not as replete with wit, and as free from low vulgarity, as thoſe of Dryden, Wycherly, and Otway? Can they honeſtly place their Wildbloods, Rodophils, Woodalls, Horners, Courtines, and Beaugards, in competition with the Mercutio and Benedic of Shakſpeare, the Valentine and Loveleſs of Fletcher, or the Truewits and Clerimonts of B. Jonſon? Dryden's contempt of Mercutio is a ſevere cenſure on his want of attention to that admirable character.

The only dramatic writer, in all Charles's reign, who wrote with ſome decency of manners and modeſty of language, was Sir George Etheridge. His Man of Mode is the original of that ſpecies of dramatic writing called genteel comedy. The ſecond Duke of Dorſet aſſured a gentleman, as greatly eſteemed for his learning and abilities as his humanity and integrity,* that Dorimant was formed from two originals: his father, the witty Earl of Dorſet, and Wilmot Earl of Rocheſter. This character is properly the firſt fine gentleman of the Engliſh ſtage; a more gay and ſpirited man of pleaſure has not been drawn ſince, unleſs we except the Sir Harry Wildair of Farquhar.

But the poets of Charles's days, either from idleneſs or want of ability, deprived the ſtage of that noble ornament of the comic muſe, the poetic ſtyle, which was the growth of our country, and equally unknown to the Greeks and Romans as to our

* Mr. Thomas Sheridan.

our neighbours, the French. It is true, as Mr. Seward very judiciouſly obſerves, 'that, although the Greeks did not wholly deprive comedy of metre, they left it not the ſhadow of poetic diction or ſentiment. But the Britons not only retained metre in their comedy, but alſo the ſtrength and nerves of poetry; which,' ſays the ſame writer, 'was a good deal owing to our blank verſe; which, at the ſame time that it is capable of the higheſt ſublimity, the moſt extenſive and nobleſt harmony of tragic and epic, yet, when uſed familiarly, is ſo near the *ſermo pedeſtris*, ſo eaſy and natural, as to be well adapted to the drolleſt comic dialogue.'*

Our dramatic poets, though unwilling to reform themſelves, at laſt found, in Collier, a ſevere, but juſt, corrector of their indecencies and blaſphemy. The phyſic he adminiſtered was ſo powerful, that a ſudden and almoſt effectual reformation took place. Dryden himſelf, who ſeldom gave up an argument to his adverſary, ſhrunk from the charge and pleaded guilty. The city of London was under particular obligations to this ſatirical critic; for a citizen, and eſpecially an alderman, was ſure to be the poet's game; he was at once dubbed a wittol and a cuckold. I believe, ſince Collier's book was publiſhed, our magiſtrates of London have pretty much eſcaped the ridicule of theatrical horns ——But Dryden, though he owned his guilt in very plain terms, would not quit the field without the throwing a few ſtones at his monitor. He ſays, I think, with juſtice, that Collier was too much given to horſe-play in his raillery; for his wit was blunt, though ſevere; and his ſtyle, though forcible was coarſe. 'I will not,'

* Seward's preface to Beaumont and Fletcher.

not,' ſays Dryden, 'ſay, that the zeal of God's houſe hath eaten him up, but I am ſure it has devoured ſome part of his good manners.' In farther defence of himſelf and his poetic brothers, he confidently aſſerts, 'there is more bawdy in one play of Beaumont and Fletcher, the Cuſtom of the Country, than in all ours together.' That play has indeed much bad language in it, and ſome indecent characters; but no candid reader will ſay, that it is without ſcenes which are quite irreprehenſible, and ſome perſonæ which no audience can diſlike.—But Dryden ſhould have called to mind his own Limberham, or Kind Keeper. This comedy, from the beginning to the end, is one ſcene of lewdneſs and debauchery, without one ſober dialogue and one ſufferable character. Father Aldo, whom, in the dramatis perſonæ, he terms an honeſt, good-natured, free-hearted, old gentleman of the town, is the moſt abandoned debauchee that ever ſpent his time in a brothel. This wretch, who is, through age, incapable of all ſenſual enjoyment himſelf, becomes the ſervile and willing agent to ſupply the fuel of vice to others.

We cannot wonder, at the time ſuch plays as Limberham were repreſented, women of character were deprived of theatrical entertainment. In thoſe days, it was a conſtant practice for the ladies to ſend their friends, of the male ſex, as ſpies, or ſcouts, to obſerve the firſt night of repreſentation. The playhouſe was then ſo offenſive, that the citizens kept aloof from it, till the poets of their own faction brought whig politics to combat with tory principles.

I could have wiſhed, that indecency had not ſtepped from the ſock to the buſkin: Dryden and Lee threw much obſcenity, as well as profaneneſs, into their moſt admired heroic plays. Should we allow

allow, that Lee's Sophoniſba has many tender and paſſionate thoughts, it muſt be owned that it abounds in paſſages fit only for a houſe of entertainment.—The old Emperor, and Nourmahul, his wife, in Aurengzebe, reproach one another in terms unſuitable to common decency as well as dignity of character.

But here let me ſtop; to make out a proceſs againſt Dryden would be as cruel as ungrateful. The Engliſh verſification is more indebted to him than to half the poets from Chaucer's time to the preſent. Much has been ſaid of this great author's perſonal conduct, of his religion, and morals.—Let me here quote a paſſage in his vindication, written by himſelf in a letter to John Dennis: *For my principles of religion, I will not juſtify them to you: I know yours are far different. For the ſame reaſon, I ſhall ſay nothing of my principles of ſtate: I believe you, in yours, follow the dictates of your reaſon, as I, in mine, do thoſe of my conſcience; if I thought myſelf in an error, I would retract it. For my morals, between man and man, I am not to be my own judge. I appeal to the world, if I have deceived or defrauded any man; and, for my private converſation, they, who ſee me every day, can be the beſt witneſſes whether or no it be blameleſs and inoffenſive.*——This letter was written about the year 1694, ſome time before he undertook his Tranſlation of Virgil. Dryden died of a mortification which began in his foot; and, ſome hours before his death, he charged his ſon, Charles, not to permit a ſurgeon to make any operation on pretence of working a cure.

Dr. Johnſon's Life of Dryden is a moſt valuable acquiſition to learning; the criticiſm is profound and the biography exact.

Otway.

Otway.

CHAP. XL.

Dryden fond of high-ſounding diction.—Inſtances of it from Don Sebaſtian.—Otway;—the firſt writer of genuine tragedy.—Wrote his firſt tragedies in rime.—Alcibiades.—Mrs. Elizabeth Barry.—Don Carlos.—Dryden.—Boheme and Mrs. Seymour.—Otway's defects.—His Caius Marius.—His praiſe of Shakſpeare.—Underhill and Nokes. Epilogue to Caius Marius.—The Orphan.—Plot.—Language.—Venice preſerved.—Shakſpeare.—Acaſto.—Charles II.—Duke of Ormond.—Duke of Buckingham—Anecdote of Carey Dillon and the Duke of Ormond.—Otway's diſreſpect for the clergy;—unjuſt.—Eminent divines.—L'Eſtrange.—Euripides.—Two laſt lines of the Orphan.—Oedipus.—Firſt actors of the Orphan.—Betterton.—Mountfort.—Williams.—Contention between Powel and Williams.—Smith's epitaph written by Booth.—Some anecdotes of the life of Mrs. Barry.—Earl of Rocheſter.—Tragedy of the Earl of Eſſex.—Queen Elizabeth.—Mrs. Porter.—Mrs. Barry's excellence acknowledged by Betterton.—Laſt part ſhe played.—Her death and epitaph.—Cauſe of her death.—Chamont.—The elder Mills.—Quin.—Booth and Walker in Polydore.—Wilks's Caſtalio.—Barry.—Mr. Garrick.—Mrs. Porter and Mrs. Cibber.

NOTWITHSTANDING I had obſerved, to the honour of Dryden, that he was the firſt of our dramatic poets, in the reign of Charles II. who, from his imitation of Shakſpeare's manner, re-

vived natural and colloquial dialogue in tragedy, yet it muſt be ſaid, that he retained, to the laſt, a predilection for the marvellous and high-ſounding ſtyle. Though he had it in his power to be the lawful monarch of true poetical language, he could not abandon the ſwell and turbulent diction of the arbitrary tyrant. What can we ſay in defence of many rhapſodical effuſions in one of his beſt tragedies, Don Sebaſtian, K. of Portugal? Dorax, after deſcribing, in very noble terms, the character of Sebaſtian, wiſhes to have fought him and to have died with him:

——— I, too, would have been ſlain,
That, catching hold upon his flitting ghoſt,
I might have robb'd him of his op'ning heaven,
And dragg'd him down with me, ſpite of predeſtination!

And Sebaſtian himſelf:

Let Fortune empty her whole quiver on me!
I have a ſoul, that, like an ample ſhield,
Can take in all, and verge enough for more!

To Thomas Otway was reſerved the honour of giving tragedy its true and genuine tone of language, diveſted of unnatural flight and unneceſſary pomp. This writer began, like the reſt of our dramatic poets in that age, with tragedy in rime. In his Alcibiades, the firſt and weakeſt of his tragedies, the public found enough to be pleaſed; and, in this play, the great actreſs, Mrs. Barry, gave the firſt indication of her riſing merit. In his ſecond dramatic piece, he formed his plot from St. Real's Hiſtory of Don Carlos, Prince of Spain. It was acted with very great applauſe, and contributed at once to raiſe the reputation and mend the fortune of the author. In his preface, Otway gives

gives a ſhort anecdote of an envious poet, who declared, *That, egad, he knew not a line in Don Carlos he would be the author of.* In the Rehearſal, *egad*, is a favourite and frequent expreſſion of poet Bayes: Dryden, who had no ſmall ſhare of envy, was, in all probability, the perſon aimed at. Don Carlos continued long a favourite drama: it was revived above fifty years ſince, at the theatre in Lincoln's-inn fields; when Boheme's action in Philip, and Mrs. Seymour, by her excellence in the Queen, rendered their names celebrated, and continued to eſtabliſh a company ſtruggling with difficulties.

But Otway wanted the variety and harmony of Dryden's numbers; nor had he his various learning, or reaſoning faculty, to embelliſh and diverſify his tragedies in rime. He ſoon followed that poet's example, and relinquiſhed his chiming fetters for blank verſe, which approaches neareſt to the iambic of the antients. Otway, like Dryden, warmed his genius with the fire of Shakſpeare; but, not content with borrowing from his original, he ſtole whole ſcenes from Romeo and Juliet, and incorporated them in his Caius Marius: this, indeed, he acknowledges in his prologue. The encomium, which he beſtows on the old bard, deſerves a place amongſt thoſe which are accumulated to his honour in the laſt edition of Johnſon and Steevens.

Our Shakſpeare wrote, too, in an age as bleſs'd,
The happieſt poet of his time, and beſt.
A gracious prince's favour cheer'd his muſe,
A conſtant favour he ne'er fear'd to loſe.
Therefore he wrote with fancy unconfin'd,
And thoughts that were immortal as his mind;
And, from the crop of his luxurious pen,
E'er ſince, ſucceeding poets humbly glean.
Though much the moſt unworthy of the throng,
Our this-day's poet fears he has done him wrong;

Like greedy beggars, that ſteal ſhreaves away,
You'll find he has rifled him of half a play.
Amidſt his baſer droſs you'll ſee it ſhine,
Moſt beautiful, amazing, and divine!

Notwithſtanding the merit of ſuch a coalition as Shakſpeare and Otway, and the excellent acting of Betterton, Smith, and Mrs. Barry, in the tragic ſcenes of the play, I believe it chiefly owed its ſupport to Underhill in Sulpitius, and Nokes in the Nurſe, who, in this part, excited ſuch repeated merriment, that he carried the name of Nurſe Nokes to his grave. Edmund Smith, in his Elegy on the Death of Philips, has given a diverting picture of this inimitable droll, who ſhone equally in burleſquing tragedy as in acting comic characters:

So, when Nurſe Nokes to act young Ammon tries.
With ſhambling legs, long chin, and fooliſh eyes,
With dangling hands he ſtrokes th'imperial robe,
And with a cuckold's air commands the globe.
The pomp and ſound the whole buffoon diſplay'd,
And Ammon's ſon more mirth than Gomez made.

The ſuperior power of pleaſing an audience, in Underhill and Nokes, is acknowledged, by the author, in the epilogue, ſpoken by Mrs. Barry.

And now for you, who here come wrapp'd in cloaks
Only for love of Underhill and Nurſe Nokes.

Otway's quitting the military life is alſo pointed out in the ſame Epilogue.

But which amongſt you is there to be found
Will take his third-day's pawn for fifty pound?
Or, now he is caſhier'd, will fairly venture
To give him ready money for's debenture?

Therefore,

> Therefore, when he received that fatal doom,
> This play came forth, in hopes his friends would come
> To help a poor disbanded soldier home.

From these lines, we may candidly and fairly conclude, that Otway's leaving the army was attended with no disgrace.

But the reputation of Otway for pathetic powers was, by the success of his Orphan, justly exalted above all the dramatists of his own and succeeding times. The characters, by being brought nearer to the condition of the audience, more deeply interest their passions than the fate and fortune of persons who are eminently placed above them.

A young lady, destitute of fortune, and who had lost her parents, left, when a child, to the care and protection of a nobleman, the friend of her dead father, is passionately solicited by his two sons, Castalio and Polydore. The pretensions of the elder, unknown to his brother, are founded on honourable love. The younger, confiding in the sincerity of his brother's declaration, that he would never marry Monimia, but strive to gain her for a mistress, is impelled to affront her with his brutal passion, as she rightly terms it; for his address, however justified in the rank days of Charles II. would scarcely now be tolerated in a brothel. During the progress of their courtship, Chamont, the young lady's brother arrives; and, on the information of an old woman, whom the author's poetical fancy transforms into a witch, he questions his sister on her present situation. The scene is varied with beautiful imagery and affecting passion.—Polydore, the younger brother, by the help of a page, discover's Castalio's treachery; and not knowing of their marriage, listens, and overhears the appointment

ment of the new-married pair. By a ſtratagem, he contrives to impoſe himſelf, in the dark, on Monimia, for his brother; and enjoys her. The diſtreſs, raiſed in conſequence of this, ends in the death of the lady and the two rival brothers.

From a plot ſo ſimple, the author has raiſed pathetic ſcenes, which, from their firſt repreſentation to the preſent day, have melted into tenderneſs the heart of every ſpectator. The language is eaſy, flowing, and familiar; ſufficiently forcible, without degenerating into vulgariſm; it is occaſionally ſtrengthened by pleaſing deſcription and warm imagery. Had it been raiſed to greater force, by higher exertion of the poet, it would neither have ſuited the plot nor the characters. That his ſtyle was more energetic, in his tragedy of Venice Preſerved, muſt be attributed to the difference of fable and the perſons employed in it. He that delineates in his mind the deſtruction of a ſtate, or kingdom, will immediately find a more animated ſtyle riſe to his imagination than that which deſcribes the diſtreſſes of a private family.—In Shakſpeare, the very idea of a conſpiracy fires his thoughts and elevates his language.*

In the character of Acaſto, Otway has drawn a portrait of a worthy nobleman, who, retired from court, retains his veneration and loyalty for his royal maſter.—That the author has given a good picture of courts, and more particularly that of Charles II. I think an attentive reader may ſee in the deſcription of it given by Acaſto in the ſecond act. After which, the good old man breaks out into a warm encomium of Charles II.

——— Yes, my aſpiring boys,
You ſhall have buſineſs when your maſter wants you!

You

* Henry IV. Macbeth, Julius Cæſar.

You cannot ſerve a nobler. I have ſerv'd him.
In this old body yet the marks remain
Of many wounds. *I've with this tongue proclaim'd*
His right, ev'n in the face of rank rebellion!
And, when a foul-mouth'd traitor once profan'd
His ſacred name, with my good ſabre drawn,
Ev'n at the head of all his giddy rout,
I ruſh'd, and clove the rebel to the chine!

Of all the noblemen, who, in the reign of Charles II. diſtinguiſhed themſelves for worth and attachment to their royal maſter, James Duke of Ormond ſtands the foremoſt; and I cannot avoid conjecturing, that this character is here ſhadowed, at leaſt part of it, under Acaſto. What ſtrengthens my opinion is the diſcourſe of the two ſervants, Paulino and Erneſto, in the firſt ſcene. Paulino, after expreſſing his wonder, that Acaſto ſhould ſtill perſiſt in hating the court, where he was born and bred, is informed, by Erneſto, that he had reaſon for his diſguſt:

——— When for what he had borne,
Long and faithful toil, he might have claim'd
Places in honour and employment high,
A huffing, ſhining, flatt'ring, cringing coward,
A canker-worm of peace, was raiſed above him.*

That Ormond was diſplaced from his government of Ireland, where he was beloved by all ranks of people, by the ungrateful Charles, to gratify the worſt man in the kingdom, Villiers Duke of Buckingham, is a fact, to which, I think, Otway alludes. It is true, Ormond did not, like Acaſto, retire from court, but kept his place of ſteward of the houſehold; which office, Charles, who reſpected virtues,

* In theſe attributes of a baſe mind, we ſee the genuine character of Buckingham; who, it is believed, formed a treacherous deſign, by his inſtrument, Blood, to aſſaſſinate this worthy noble man.

virtues, though he wanted the honeſty to imitate them, had not the courage to take from him. The king, who was extremely affable, and made it his conſtant buſineſs to pleaſe every man with his converſation when he went to the levee, ſaw Ormond always ready to pay his court; but, by Buckingham's influence, he could neither ſpeak to nor look at him. This behaviour was copied by all who frequented the court with a view to gain employment or to ſecure the miniſter's favour. But thoſe who had nothing to aſk, and went there only to make their bows, formed a circle about Ormond, and liſtened with great attention to his diſcourſe. It happened one day, that the king, ſtruck with the reſpect paid to his old loyal ſervant, was willing to break through his forced ſilence, and ſpeak to him; but the favourite's preſence embarraſſed him ſo much, that Buckingham, in a whiſper, ſaid to the king, 'I wiſh your majeſty would reſolve me one queſtion: Is the Duke of Ormond out of favour with your majeſty, or is your majeſty out of favour with the Duke of Ormond? for, of the two, you ſeem to be in moſt confuſion.'* This good man's opinion of the court may be gathered from what he ſaid to Cary Dillon, afterwards Lord Roſcommon. Dillon preſſed the duke to uſe his intereſt for a ſuit he had to the king; aſſuring him, at the ſame time, that he had no friend at court but God and his lordſhip: 'Alas! poor Cary,' ſaid the duke, 'thou couldſt not have two friends that have leſs intereſt at court, or leſs reſpect ſhewn them there.'

I ſhall conclude what I have to ſay, on this matter, with an account of Charles's ſubſequent behaviour to Ormond; which is ſo remarkable, that, though

* Carte's life of Ormond, Vol. II.

though it confers ſome little honour on the king, it throws a luſtre on the duke's character which nothing can tarniſh.

After the king, had for ſeveral years, treated the Duke of Ormond with coldneſs and neglect, on a ſudden he invited him to ſupper: he treated him with ſuch familiarity and kindneſs as if nothing had happened, and appointed him once more to the government of Ireland. The next day, at the levee, Charles ſaid to his courtiers: 'Yonder comes Ormond, I have done all I can to diſoblige that man, and to make him as diſcontented as others: *but he will not be diſobliged with me; he will be loyal in ſpite of my teeth.*—I muſt e'en take him in again; and he is the fitteſt perſon to go to Ireland.

If I am deceived in my conjecture, reſpecting the application of Acaſto's character to the Duke of Ormond, I ſhall only have amuſed my readers with ſome anecdotes which are not to be found in the general hiſtory of this country.

Act II.

Chamont and the Chaplain.

CHAMONT.

Nay, but thou art a hypocrite. Is there not one
Of all thy tribe that's honeſt in your ſchools?
Ye all live lotheſome, ſervile, ſneaking, lives;
Not free enough to practiſe generous truth,
Though you pretend to teach it to the world

Men, immerſed in luxury and debauchery, as Otway and his brother-poets were in the reign of Charles, could not be very impartial judges of a clergyman's ſacred function or character. They had no opportunity to be acquainted with the worthy

thy men of that order; their time was diſſipated in places which were unknown even to ſober laymen. Otway was the ſon of a clergyman, who left him, for inheritance, as he himſelf has told us,* nothing but his loyalty; and this alone might ſurely have prevented his illiberal abuſe on the order. But, if ever the clergy of this country deſerved eſteem and reſpect, it was during the reign of this abandoned monarch.—Before the reſtoration of Charles, the church of England had endured a twenty years perſecution; and, from that fiery trial, came out more pure and bright. Such ornaments of piety and learning can hardly be produced in any period of our hiſtory, as at that time ſhone out with ſuperior luſtre.—The names of Wilkins, Cudworth, Barrow, Tillotſon, Stillingfleet, Whichcot, Scot, Patrick, Burnet, and Sharp, to whom many more might be added, will juſtify what I have aſſerted.

That *boutefeu*, Sir Roger L'Eſtrange, towards the latter end of Charles's reign, by his inflammatory paper, called the Obſervator, endeavoured to miſlead the clergy in general. But ſuch men as I have mentioned were not to be ſhaken or biaſſed by a hacknied incendiary. The intereſted and fanatic part of the clergy, and ſuch all churches have, were, indeed, dupes to L'Eſtrange and their own paſſions; but the greater part, to their honour, remained untainted.

Act

* In his dedication.

Act IV. Scene I.

Acasto, Chamont, Monimia.

ACASTO.

You talk to me in parables, Chamont.
You may have known that I am no wordy man.
Fine speeches are the instruments of knaves,
Or fools that use them when they want good sense.
But honesty
Needs no disguise or ornament. ———
Be plain.

Few of our dramatic poets, except Dryden and Congreve, seem to have had any acquaintance with the Greek tragedians: I should have otherwise suspected, that Otway had, in the above lines of Acasto, imitated the following speech of Polynices to his brother, Eteocles, in the Phœnissæ of Euripides:

Απλως ο μυθος της αληθειας εφυ,
Ξυ ποικιλων δει τα 'νδιχ' ερμενευματων·
Εχει γαρ αυτα καιρον· ο δ' αδικος λογος,
Νοσων εν αυτῳ, φαρμακων δειται σοφων.

The words of truth are simple; justice needs not
The circling train of wily argument
Clear in its proofs. Injustice, in itself
Unsound, requires the medicinal trick
Of glosing sophistry.

Potter's Euripides.

Act V. Two last lines.

CHAMONT.

'Tis thus that heav'n its empire does maintain:
It may afflict, but man must not complain.

This

This is but a bad moral deduced from the catastrophe of the fable, and borders on fatalism. Oedipus, in the conclusion of Phœnissæ, utters the same doctrine.

Αλλα γαρ τι ταυτα θρηνω και ματην οδυρομαι;
Τας γαρ εκ θεων αναγκας θνητον ονθ' ὑπερφερειν.

——————— But why in vain
Lament I thus and wail, since mortal man
Must bear the hard necessity of fate!

Potter.

The principal original actors, in the Orphan, were—Betterton, Castalio; Williams, Polydore; Smith, Chamont; and Mrs. Barry, Monimia. Cibber has told us, that the Castalio of Betterton was superior to all the performances he had ever seen of the character; though he confessed, at the same time, that he was not so eminent in representing lovers, from person and elocution, as parts which required less softness. Mountfort, a younger man, who succeeded him, being endowed by nature with a handsome person, a most melodious voice, and pleasing address, was, at least to the female part of the audience, which I think best qualified to distinguish, rather nearer to the idea of an accomplished and successful lover. Williams was an actor of merit, but courted the bottle with more vigour than the profession of acting. Polydore was formerly so great a favourite with the audience, that, when Powel and he were cast into the two brothers, they contended who should act this approved libertine; and he, who obtained the favour, paid for it, as I have been told, with a fine for a sacrifice at the shrine of Bacchus. Smith was an actor of such eminence as to excite the indolent Booth to write his epitaph. He was long the associate of Better-

Betterton in the management of the theatre. Mrs. Barry's Monimia ſeems to have raiſed that reputation to the height which had been gradually increaſing. As Cibber conſiders this actreſs to have been far ſuperior to all he had ever known in tragedy, it will not be an idle buſineſs to give ſome account of the methods employed to form ſo much excellence.

It is ſaid, that Mrs. Barry was the daughter of Edward Barry, Eſq. a barriſter,* who was afterwards called Colonel Barry, from his having raiſed a regiment, for the ſervice of Charles I. in the civil wars.—The misfortunes ariſing from this engagement, involved himſelf and family in ſuch diſtreſs, that his children were obliged to make their own fortunes. Lady Davenant, an acquaintance of Sir. William Davenant, from her friendſhip to Colonel Barry, gave his daughter a genteel education. She made her her conſtant companion, and always viſited her acquaintance with her young friend. This early knowledge of polite life was of ſervice to Mrs. Barry, as it gave an eaſe and grace to her perſon and behaviour. Above forty years ſince, I ſaw, at Mrs. Bracegirdle's houſe, in Howard-ſtreet, a picture of Mrs. Barry, by Kneller, in the ſame apartments with the portraits of Betterton, Mr. Congreve, and Mrs. Bracegirdle. Mrs. Barry, it appeared from the painting, had not been a great beauty, but her countenance commanded attention and was extremely expreſſive. When her friend, Lady Davenant, recommended her to the ſtage, her pretenſions to notice were a good air and manner, and a very ſtrong and pleaſing voice. Her ear was ſo bad, and the players found it ſo extremely difficult to teach her, that they pronounced her incapable

* Hiſtory of the ſtage, printed for E. Curl, 1741.

capable of making any progreſs in acting. Three times, ſays the hiſtorian of the Engliſh ſtage, ſhe was rejected, and, by the intereſt of her patroneſs, re-inſtated. Cibber ſpeaks only of one diſcharge.

There was ſo little expectation of her arriving to any degree of excellence, that ſeveral perſons of quality, on ſeeing her attempt a character of ſome importance, gave their opinion, that ſhe never could be an actreſs. The earl of Rocheſter, who, at that time, paid his addreſſes to Mrs. Barry, offered a conſiderable wager, that, in the ſpace of ſix months, he would engage ſhe would be one of the moſt approved performers of the theatre. The earl's offer was accepted. From the moment he made this engagement, he renewed his addreſſes to Mrs. Barry; and, by often converſing with her, found ſhe was miſtreſs of exquiſite charms. It has been ſaid, that he fixed his affections on her more ſtrongly than on any other female. Letters addreſſed to Madam B——, by the Earl of Rocheſter, were printed in that edition of his poems fit for the public eye, which was publiſhed by J. Tonſon in 1716; and are generally ſaid to be the earl's epiſtolary correſpondence with this celebrated actreſs. In ſome of them, he ſpeaks with great fondneſs of a child he had by her, to whom he afterwards left by will, an annuity of 40l.* One of the firſt parts, the earl taught his fair pupil, was Iſabella, the Queen of Hungary, in the earl of Orrery's tragedy of Muſtapha. Mrs. Barry had an excellent underſtanding, but not a muſical ear; ſo that ſhe could not catch the ſounds or emphaſes taught her; but fell into a diſagreeable tone, the fault of moſt young ſtage-adventurers.—To cure her of this defect Lord Rocheſter cauſed

* Hiſtory of the Engliſh ſtage, 1741.

cauſed her to enter into the meaning of every ſentiment; he taught her not only the proper cadence or ſounding of the voice, but to ſeize alſo the paſſions, and adapt her whole behaviour to the ſituations of the character. It is ſaid that in order to accompliſh his intention, beſides the many private inſtructions he gave her, he cauſed her to rehearſe the part no leſs than thirty times upon the ſtage, and, of theſe, about twelve times in the dreſs in which ſhe was to play.

The firſt night ſhe acted this part, Rocheſter brought the king, the duke of York, and his dutcheſs, to the play. Her look of diſtreſs, and her whole deportment, before ſhe ſpoke, greatly prejudiced the audience in her favour: but, when ſhe uttered the following words to the Cardinal,—

> My lord, my ſorrow ſeeks not your relief:
> You are not fit to judge a mother's grief;
> You have no child for an untimely grave,
> Nor can you loſe what I deſire to ſave.——

Here they ſaw majeſty diſtreſſed; and a widowed queen, inſulted by her ſubjects, feeling all that an afflicted mother could ſuffer, from a ſtern counſellor's forcing her to yield her only ſon, to be ſacrificed to the enemy, to ſave themſelves and city. The ſeveral conflicting paſſions were ſo feelingly touched by her, that the theatre reſounded with loud applauſe. The Dutcheſs of York was ſo pleaſed with Mrs. Barry, that ſhe made her a preſent of her wedding ſuit; from her ſhe learned, ſoon afterwards, to improve in the Engliſh language; and, when Queen of England, it is ſaid ſhe gave her her coronation-robes, to act Queen Elizabeth, in the Earl of Eſſex.—In this wretched tragedy, her action was ſo truly excellent, that, in ſpite of the

the worſt language that an author can poſſibly write, ſhe revived Elizabeth, the great idol of her people.

'To ſay, in the common language, that Elizabeth loved her people, is talking idly,' ſays Voltaire; 'for what prince ever loved the people?' However, ſhe certainly had the art to make them believe ſo; for ſhe governed them above forty years, to their own happineſs and ſatisfaction, and the approbation of all Europe. Mrs. Barry perfectly underſtood the character of this princeſs; ſhe pronounced

What means my giving people?

with ſuch exquiſite ſkill, that it never failed to draw the approving notice of the audience. Above fifty years ſince, I ſaw her great imitator and admired pupil, Mrs. Porter, in this character, and Elizabeth in the Albion Queens. In both ſhe acquitted herſelf to the admiration of the audience; though all, who had remembered Mrs. Barry, pronounced her very inferior to her teacher. She was ſo lame, that, during the whole play, ſhe was obliged to make uſe of a crutched cane, which ſhe contrived to uſe with advantage, eſpecially in that ſcene of the Albion Queens, where Elizabeth, with wonderful diſſimulation and royal hypocriſy, ſeems unwilling to ſign the unfortunate Mary's death-warrant: in the aſſumed agitation of her mind during the feigned conflict, and when ſhe pronounced the following words——

Quick! give my roving thoughts no time for reaſon;
But thou, ſucceſsful devil, put the pen
Into my hand, and hell into my boſom!—

And after ſigning the warrant——

There, there, it is—

Mrs.

Mrs. Porter, with her cane, ſtruck the ſtage with ſuch vehemence, that the audience reiterated loud applauſe.

But Mrs. Barry was miſtreſs of all the paſſions of the mind: love, joy, grief, rage, tenderneſs, and jealouſy, were all repreſented by her with equal ſkill and equal effect. In the play of the Orphan, when, on leaving Caſtalio, in the laſt act, ſhe burſt out into that affecting exclamation, 'O poor Caſtalio!' ſhe never failed to ſhed tears herſelf, nor was it poſſible for the audience to reſtrain from correſpondent lamentations. Betterton bore this teſtimony to the perfection of this eminent actreſs: that ſhe often ſo greatly exerted her art in an indifferent character, that her acting had given ſucceſs to plays that would diſguſt the moſt patient reader. When ſhe accepted a part, ſhe conſulted the author concerning his intention in every ſcene. The laſt new character ſhe acted was, I think, Phædra, in Edmund Smith's tragedy of Phædra and Hippolytus. Though Mrs. Oldfield and the author fell out concerning ſome particular lines in the part of Iſmena, Mrs. Barry and he were in perfect harmony.

Cibber relates, in his Apology, that Mrs. Barry died, of a fever, in the latter part of Queen Anne's reign; and judges, by this expreſſion, in her laſt delirium,—'Ha! ha! and ſo they make us lords by dozens!'—that it was about the time when twelve peers were created at once. The date of her epitaph, at Acton, is fixed two years after this extraordinary promotion.* An actreſs,

* The following epitaph is in the church-yard of Acton:

Near

who was in London when Mrs. Barry died, aſſured me, many years ſince, that her death was owing to the bite of a favourite lap-dog, who, unknown to her, had been ſeized with madneſs.

I have dwelt the longer on Mrs. Barry, on account of her ſuperior excellence.—Cibber, writing in the year 1738, declared he had ſeen nothing equal to her.

The character of Chamont had not engaged the attention of very eminent actors. The elder Mills, many years before his death, was unqualified for a part which required a younger man, with much variety of paſſion, and quick tranſition from anger to calmneſs, and from calmneſs to returning rage. Quin was utterly unfit for that, or any other part in the play, except Acaſto; his judgment directed him to quit Chamont many years before he left the ſtage.

The gay libertine air, which Booth gave to Polydore, has not been equalled ſince, though Walker, his pupil, was more than a tolerable copy of his maſter. The manners of the times are ſo utterly changed, that the groſs addreſs and brutal courtſhip of the character muſt now be ſoftened into a more delicate ſenſe of what is due to a young lady of honour.

The Caſtalio of Wilks was long and juſtly admired. His graceful addreſs in the firſt act, his warm enjoyment of Monimia's reconciliation to him in the ſecond, his rage and reſentment in the third and fourth act, but, above all, his tenderneſs and

Near this place
Lies the body of Elizabeth Barry,
Of the pariſh of St. Mary Le Savoy;
Who departed this life the 7th of November, 1713,
Aged 55 years.

and diſtreſs in the fine interview with Monimia in the fifth act, a love ſcene as truly affecting as any to be found in tragedy, juſtly entitled him to the ſpectators moſt generous approbation. And yet thoſe, who can remember Wilks and Barry, will own, that the latter much excelled the former. In expreſſing the blended paſſions of love, tenderneſs, and grief, Barry was unrivalled. In the Memoirs of Mr. Garrick's Life, I have ſaid ſo much of his juſtly-admired Chamont, that I can add nothing to it here. To paſs by, with neglect, the Monimia of Mrs. Porter would be unjuſt to the merits of an excellent actreſs.—To thoſe, who had not ſeen Mrs. Barry, notwithſtanding her unharmonious voice, ſhe appeared inimitable. This actreſs concealed the art of her profeſſion ſo ſkilfully, that ſhe ſeemed to realiſe the paſſions, and to be inſpired with the various ſituations of her characters.

Mrs. Cibber's Monimia many will call to mind with pleaſure, and do juſtice to the fine expreſſion and feeling of that impaſſioned performer. The public ſaw, I believe, only during two winters, with uncommon pleaſure, in the tragedy of the Orphan, a Garrick, a Barry, and a Cibber.

CHAP. XLI.

Plot of Venice Preſerved.——Narrative of St. Real and the tragedy compared.—Bedamar and the Duke d'Oſſuna.—Shakſpeare's Richard III.*—Euripides. —Pierre and Jaffier.—Hiſtory of a Grecian lady. —Particular time when Venice Preſerved was acted. —Duke of York.—Oates, Bedloe, &c.—Popiſh Plot.—Otway a loyaliſt.—Scenes of Venice Preſerved hurt by ribaldry.—Lord Shafteſbury.—Antonio and Renault.—Otway's enemies deſcribed.—Whigs and tories.—The ſenate of Venice and the houſe of commons.—Otway's character in Jaffier. —Firſt act of the play.—Belvidera's excellence.—Gay's parody.—Pierre's artifice.—Conſpirators.—Renault and Elliot.—Belvidera and the Conſpirators.—Suſpicions entertained againſt Jaffier.—His anxiety and diſtreſs.—Art of the Poet.—Fate of Pierre;—and Jaffier.—Acquilina and Antonio. —Wonderful pathos of the laſt act.—Atheiſt, the laſt play of Otway.—His unhappy circumſtances. —Cauſe aſſigned.—Common account of Otway's death;—contradicted by Dr. Warton.—True cauſe of Dryden's envy to Otway.—Death, the great deſtroyer of envy.—Original actors in Venice Preſerved.—Betterton and Smith.—Mrs. Barry.—Mr. Wilks and Mrs. Rogers.—Mills in Pierre.—Booth and Wilks.—Colley Cibber.—Harry Carey. —Booth's want of candour.—Mrs. Porter, Ryan, Quin, and Mrs. Seymour.—Garrick reſigns Pierre for Jaffier.—Moſſop's Pierre.—An anecdote.—Mrs. Cibber.—Mrs. Siddons.—Mrs. Yates, Mrs. Crawford, and Miſs Young.—Mr. Brereton.—Mr. Benſley.*

THE

THE fable of Venice Preſerved afforded a larger field for the exertion of Otway's abilities than the cataſtrophe of an unhappy marriage in a private family. A plot, formed for the deſtruction of a ſtate is a ſubject, I have already obſerved, that would rouſe the genius of any writer.

The ſtory is taken from St. Real's Conſpiracy of the Marquis de Bedamar and the Duke d'Oſſuna againſt the Republic of Venice. The narrative of St. Real is ſkilfully written; but is by no means ſuperior to the Engliſh tragedy, as Voltaire preſumptuouſly aſſerts. In the Hiſtory, you have ſome characters ſtrongly marked and well delineated; more eſpecially of that extraordinary man, the Marquis of Bedamar, the moſt accompliſhed politician then living; you have likewiſe a good outline of the moſt remarkable conſpirators, particularly Pierre and Renault. But can we compare a bare narrative with the animating dialogues of Pierre and Jaffier, and the heart-felt ſcenes of anguiſh between the lovely diſtreſſed Belvidera and her almoſt diſtracted huſband. In St. Real, Jaffier becomes a conſpirator againſt the ſtate of Venice, in whoſe military ſervice he was employed, from the hopes of plunder, and his attachment to Pierre, his friend. In the tragedy, he is driven to the utmoſt diſtreſs, with a wife whom he tenderly loves, by a cruel father-in-law; and, though nothing can juſtify treaſon, yet ſurely the being ſurpriſed into a conſpiracy by extreme want, and the inſidious arts of a man he eſteems to be a friend, exhibits motives leſs ſordid than the other. St. Real's account of the conſpiracy reſembles a gloomy repreſentation of a ſtorm, interſperſed with

flaſhes

flaſhes of lightning which ſerve to make the picture more terrible and deformed.

The ſcenes of conflicting paſſions, animated by intereſting ſituations of character, render Venice Preſerved a grand hiſtorical painting, worthy the pencil of the moſt accompliſhed artiſt.

The conduct of the plot has been highly cenſured by the critics, not altogether, I am afraid, without cauſe. Something may yet be advanced in our author's defence: the hero of the piece, they ſay, is a villain; and ſo is Richard the Third, in the tragedy of that name; but the uſe Shakſpeare has made of his actions and character has fixed this piece for ever on the Engliſh ſtage. The anſwer, which Euripides gave to one who cenſured him for bringing on the ſtage Ixion, who was a wicked blaſphemer, may ſerve for Otway: 'It is true,' ſaid the Greek poet, 'I have exhibited a man talking profanely; but, remember, for that crime I have nailed him to a croſs.' The Engliſh poet may allege, in his behalf, 'I have adorned Pierre with ſentiments which would become a better man; I have made him

'A fine, gay, bold-fac'd, villain:

But at laſt I have brought him to the wheel; from which he eſcapes only by a milder death, the ſtab of a friend.'

Neither Pierre nor Jaffier, according to St. Real, were Venetians. The firſt was, by birth, a Norman; by profeſſion, a corſair; one who had given proofs of his knowledge of ſea-affairs, and had made a large fortune by his courage in attacking, and afterwards plundering, ſhips in the Mediterranean. Jaffier was of Provence, and principally known as the particular friend of Pierre.

From

From this connection, and by marrying him to a daughter of a Venetian ſenator, the poet has worked up the plot of his play. Venice is ſaved, in Otway, by the reſiſtleſs charms and preſſing remonſtrances of a virtuous woman. In St. Real, a female, from the ſpirit of revenge, joins in a plot to maſſacre a whole people. A Grecian lady of a noble family, born in one of the iſlands of the Archipelago, was ſeduced to give up her honour, by the governor of the iſle, under a promiſe of immenſe riches. The father of the lady, on his ſoliciting the ſeducer to perform his compact, was baſely murdered by him for his importunity. The daughter immediately, with all her effects, ſet ſail for Venice. She laid her caſe before the ſenate, and petitioned for juſtice. They turned a deaf ear to her remonſtrances; and ſhe, having ſpent her little all in vain attendance upon the ſenate, was reduced to the neceſſity of repairing her loſs by her beauty. No reſentment can be more violent than that of perſons nobly born, when driven by the hand of power to gain ſubſiſtence by means unworthy of their rank. This is the lady whom Otway calls, in the play, Acquilina. Otway might have made a different uſe of this character; he might, perhaps, have wrought ſome intereſting ſituations from the contraſt of the two females.

The ſecond title of the play, the Plot Diſcovered, was given to it in alluſion to that which is called the Popiſh Plot, which had then raged when this play was repreſented. The particular time, when Venice Preſerved was firſt acted, is fixed by the author in his epilogue, ſpeaking of James Duke of York:

With

With indignation, then, let each brave heart
Rouſe and unite to take his injur'd part;
Till royal love and goodneſs call him home,
And ſongs of triumph wait him as he come.

The duke was then in Scotland, whence he returned to England in March, 1682. From the deteſted characters of Oates, Bedloe, and others, the witneſſes employed to authenticate that vile combination againſt the public quiet, called the Popiſh Plot, it has been queſtioned whether ſuch a conjuration ever exiſted; though few will deny, that, during the greateſt part of Charles's reign, and the whole of that of his brother James, there was a formed conſpiracy to ſubvert the religion and conſtitution of the kingdom. Hume himſelf brings teſtimony to this. Otway, though not rewarded for his attachment to the court, was a very ſtaunch loyaliſt. Many paſſages, from this tragedy and Caius Marius, may be alleged in proof; and, indeed, ſuch was his zeal againſt the whigs, that he contaminated his Venice Preſerved with the moſt indecent ribaldry, from no other view than to ridicule the character of Antony Aſhley Cooper, firſt Earl of Shafteſbury. Antonio, the fooliſh ſpeech-maker, the lover, in the play, of Acquilina, is made to repreſent this great ſtateſman; and, when Leigh and Mrs. Currer performed the parts of doting cully and rampant courtezan, the applauſe was as loud as the triumphant tories, for ſo they were at that time, could beſtow. But the author knew too well, that the audience could not be ſo far impoſed on as to imagine there was *any* reſemblance, except, perhaps, that which he imputes to him of laſciviouſneſs, between his fooliſh Antonio and Shafteſbury; and therefore, in his prologue,

prologue, he ſeems to hint, that he intended the part of Renault, as well as Antonio, for our great politician:

Here is a traitor that is very old,
Turbulent, ſubtle, miſchievous, and bold;
Bloody, revengeful; and, to crown his part,
Loves fumbling with a wench with all his heart;
Till, after having many change- paſs'd,
In ſpite of age, thank heaven! is hang'd at laſt.
Next is a ſenator that keeps a whore;
In Venice none a higher-office bore;
To lewdneſs every night the letcher ran:
Shew me, all London, ſuch another man;
Match him at Mother Creſwell's, if you can.

Some alluſion, to the ſearch made in the Earl of Shafteſbury's apartments for treaſonable papers, ſeems here intended. The report given out was, that a female friend of his lordſhip was diſcovered under his bed, or in a cloſet.

The poet, in his epilogue, takes notice of certain malicious enemies his loyalty had provoked; but the lines are rendered ſo obſcure, by length of time, that nothing certain can be diſcovered from them:

And, though againſt him cauſeleſs hatred riſe,
And daily, where he goes of late, he ſpies
The ſcowls of ſullen and revengeful eyes,
'Tis what he knows with much contempt to bear;
He ſerves a cauſe too good to let him fear.
He fears no poiſon from an incens'd drab;
No ruffian's five-foot ſword nor raſcal's ſtab;
Nor any other ſnares of miſchief laid:—
Not a Roſe-alley cudgel-ambuſcade.

In the laſt line, Otway, perhaps, alludes to a ſound beating, which Dryden underwent, from two unknown perſons, much about this time.

During the Popiſh Plot, and while the excluſion-bill was depending, the whigs and tories ſeemed to have been in a ſtate of political inſanity; the latter eſpouſing openly the cauſe of arbitrary power, while the former were little leſs than ſtaunch advocates for democracy.—On the ſide of loyalty were liſted the poets of genius: Dryden, Lee, and Otway, were an overmatch for Shadwell, Settle, and others. The audiences, divided in political principles, fell often into riot and tumult. One ſide of the theatre loudly applauded what the other with violence exploded. The ſenate of Venice was an excellent ſtalking-horſe, whence Otway took his aim at the houſe of commons. The following part of Pierre's ſpeech, in the firſt act, was levelled at the abuſe of power, in that aſſembly, by the frequent and unjuſt impriſonment of perſons who were ſuppoſed to be concerned in the Popiſh Plot:

——————— To ſee our ſenators
Cheat the deluded people with a ſhow
Of liberty.——
They ſay by them our hands are free from fetters:
Yet whom they pleaſe they put in baſeſt bonds;
Bring whom they pleaſe to infamy and ruin.——
All that bear this are villains! and I one,
Not to rouſe up at the great call of nature,
And check the growth of theſe domeſtic ſpoilers,
Who make us ſlaves, and tell us 'tis our charter!

Theſe lines were heard, by the majority of the audience, with rapture and applauſe, and applied as the author intended. But, amidſt all his efforts to ſupport the royal cauſe, poor Otway was ever in diſtreſs. Some paſſages, in the firſt and ſecond act, we can juſtly apply to the poet himſelf.—In the opening of the play, he thus complains to his father-in-law, Priuli:

——For

——For I have known
The luſcious ſweets of plenty; every night
Have ſlept with ſoft content about my head,
And never wak'd but to a joyful morning:
Yet now muſt fall, like a full ear of corn,
Whoſe bloſſom ſcap'd, yet's wither'd in the rip'ning.

And farther, in the ſame act, ſtill more pathetically:

——Tell me why, good heaven!
Thou mad'ſt me what I am? with all the ſpirit,
Aſpiring thoughts, and elegant deſires,
That fill the happieſt man? Ah! rather why
Did'ſt thou not form me ſordid as my fate;
Baſe-minded, dull, and fit to carry burdens?
Why have I ſenſe to know the curſe that's on me?

The fable is conducted with art. The expoſition, or, as the learned term it, the protaſis, of the plot, is exceedingly happy. In the firſt ſcene, between Jaffier and Priuli, Jaffier pathetically deſcribes his own and Belvidera's diſtreſsful ſituation; the noble manner by which he gained her affection, by plunging into the deep to ſave her life at the hazard of his own, with other correſponding incidents, are deſcribed in terms moſt lively and affecting. Pierre's arrival brings freſh affliction and diſtreſs to the unhappy Jaffier; the pillage of his houſe, by the implements of legal power, is painted in the moſt aggravating terms, and deſcribed as an action of wanton brutality. The ſpeaker cloſes his invective with a beautiful portrait of the wretched Belvidera; and this the author artfully heightens with all the force of animated expreſſion, blended with pathetic touches, to increaſe the anguiſh of the unhappy huſband, and prepare his mind to entertain the moſt deſperate councils. The act is cloſed with a moſt affecting

ſce-

ſcene between the unfortunate pair. The panegyric, on the beautiful part of the creation, is highly finiſhed by an author whoſe whole ſoul ſeems to have been made up of love and friendſhip. The conjugal affection of Belvidera, in circumſtances of the moſt trying nature, is the boaſt of the Engliſh ſtage; nor can we find any thing equal to it, except in the Alceſtis of Euripides.

Gay, in his farce of the What d'ye call it, has parodied one or two ſpeeches of this affecting dialogue:

JAFFIER.

Can'ſt thou bear cold and hunger? &c.

FILBERT.

Can'ſt thou bear hunger? can'ſt thou march and toil?

BELVIDERA.

Though the bare earth be all our reſting-place,
Its roots our food, ſome cliſt our habitation,
I'll make this arm a pillow for thy head;
And, as thou ſighing lieſt, and ſwell'd with ſorrow,
Creep to thy boſom, pour the balm of love
Into thy ſoul, and kiſs thee to thy reſt;
Then praiſe our God, and watch thee till the morning.

KITTY CARROT.

Yes, yes, my Thomas, we will go together;
Beyond the ſeas together we will go;
In camps together, as in harveſt, glow.
This arm ſhall be a bolſter for thy head;
I'll fetch clean ſtraw to make my ſoldier's bed;
There, while thou ſleep'ſt, my apron o'er thee hold,
Or with it patch the tent againſt the cold.

The difference, between parody and burleſque, is here exemplified. There is nothing, in Kitty Carrot's ſpeech, that can move laughter. The ſituations

ſituations are ſimilar; but, in rank and education, the perſons are different, and conſequently their language.

The ſtrange mixture of abſurd and obſcene interviews, between the old doting ſenator and his miſtreſs, with the main plot, has now deprived the play of its proper connection of buſineſs. The fable is too much hurried on, the ſcenes are broken, and the time ſhortened, in many intereſting ſituations, from the neceſſity of expunging what was written to pleaſe a court-faction, but was become, in proceſs of time, odious and diſguſting. To dwell upon ſuch beauties, as cannot but occur to every reader of Venice Preſerved, would be impertinent. I ſhall juſt take notice of ſome remarkables in ſtyle, and of ſome deviations of the poet from St. Real's hiſtory of the conſpiracy. In the firſt ſcene of the ſecond act, between Jaffier and Pierre, we cannot avoid calling to mind that colloquial language ſo familiar to Shakſpeare and other old dramatiſts: Pierre, putting a purſe into his friend's hand, ſays,——

——Here's money to buy pins;
Marriage is chargeable.

The other replies,——

——I but half wiſh'd to ſee
The devil, and he's here already. Well!
What muſt this buy?—rebellion! murder! treaſon!
Tell me which way I muſt be damn'd for this!

Without going into the uſual method of cenſuring the ſtyle of our modern tragedies, I believe every man will agree, with me, that the language of Otway and Southern cannot be mended or improved;—through them nature ſpeaks, and ſpeaks with equal freedom and force.

Renault's

Renault's character, as a conſpirator of eminence, and in great truſt with the Spaniſh ambaſſador, is drawn faithfully from St. Real. Why Otway ſhould involve Elliot, his countryman, in this conſpiracy, I can ſee no cauſe, except his wantonly branding the Engliſh with the charge of treaſon. But the poet found no warrant for this in his original. St. Real ſays, indeed, that Elliot was an experienced ſea-officer in the ſervice of Spain; and no otherwiſe concerned in the plot than as he was employed by the Duke of Oſſuna to command a fleet, which was to ſecond the enterpriſe of Bedamar againſt the republic of Venice. One of the braveſt and worthieſt of men has made the name of Elliot dear to every lover of his country, dear to all mankind; and it is a pleaſure to wipe away a diſgrace fixed on that honoured name by the inadvertence or folly of the poet.

The introducing an amiable and delicate female, amongſt a gang of deſperate parricides, muſt ſhock the ſpectator; and, from that circumſtance, he may divine the diſcovery of the plot. The attempt of Renault, to violate the chaſtity of Belvidera, rouſes Jaffier from that ſtate of mind in which his miſtaken friendſhip for Pierre had plunged him. The ſanguinary and brutal charge of Renault, which is partly copied from the Hiſtory, is heard by Pierre with approbation and pleaſure, but by Jaffier with horror and deteſtation. In the hiſtory, as well as the tragedy, Renault obſerves the countenance and diſtreſs of Jaffier, during his poſitive orders to ſpare neither ſex nor age. He communicates his ſuſpicions to Pierre, who, with ſome difficulty, prevails upon him not to kill his friend on ſuſpicion; and lays before him, with great earneſtneſs, the apprehended conſequences of

ſuch

ſuch an act. The ſenate, on hearing that d'Oſſuna's fleet was at ſea, ordered Pierre to ſail immediately, with ſome ſhips of war, to watch their motions. To this ſingle circumſtance, perhaps, Venice owed her ſafety; for Jaffier, being ſeparated from his friend, who had kept a watchful eye over his conduct, had now full leiſure to indulge his melancholy reflections, and to give way, undiſturbed, to the motions of humanity ariſing in his breaſt. The conflict of his mind was great. His imagination painted to him all the horrors of a city ſurprized and taken by ſtorm, ſubjected to the moſt ſhocking of diſaſters; he heard, he thought, the cries of children trodden under feet, the groans of old men whoſe throats were devoted to the ſword, and the ſcreams of virgins and matrons raviſhed.* So ſtrongly was his imagination impreſſed with terror, that he ſaw nothing but palaces tumbling down, churches in flames, and the moſt holy places violated with blood and ſlaughter.

Venice, the ſad and deplorable Venice, was continually before his eyes. On the other hand, he reflected how infamous it was to break through his moſt ſolemn engagements and betray his friends. And ſuch friends! men of intrepidity, equal to the diſcharge of every office in the cabinet or the field. And what, alas! will be their puniſhment? the moſt excruciating which the wit of the moſt arbitrary tyrants could poſſibly invent. The very priſons of Venice were more calculated to ſhake the courage of the ſtouteſt man than the capital puniſhments of other nations. Theſe laſt reflections kept him in ſuſpence for a time, and balanced the afflicting ſenſations which the idea of Venice deſtroyed had

* St. Real.

had excited. His curioſity to ſee the ceremony of the doge's wedding the Adriatic, which preceded the day intended for the execution of the conſpiracy, at length determined his wavering mind. The ſight of all Venice aſſembled in tranquillity to enjoy this great day of feſtivity, filled Jaffier with the tenderest and moſt unſupportable emotions; he could not endure the thought of ſuch a number of happy people being on a ſudden plunged into the deepeſt gulf of miſery and deſtruction.

The reader, by comparing theſe circumſtances, borrowed from the narrative, will perceive with how much art the poet has woven them into his plot to produce dramatic effect. All the affecting motives, which prevail on the moſt determined man to quit his purpoſe, are put into the mouth of Belvidera. The exacting an oath from the ſenate, to ſpare the lives of twenty-two conſpirators, is likewiſe taken from St. Real. The paſſionate and pathetic ſcenes which follow, and the reſt of the plot, except the ſenate's violating their oaths of pardon, owe their exiſtence to the poet's invention. The fate of Pierre is thus related by the hiſtorian.—Two perſons of truſt were ſent on board the veſſel which Pierre commanded; who under pretence of communicating freſh orders from the ſenate, drew him into a private conference, in the midſt of which they plunged their poniards into his boſom, and afterwards cauſed his body to be thrown into the ſea.

Jaffier, inconſolable for the loſs of his friend, with great bitterneſs reproached the ſenate with their perfidy. They obliged him to take from them 3000 ducats, and baniſhed him their territories. Breathing nothing but revenge, he ſoon after joined ſome of the conſpirators, who were raiſing diſturbances

diſturbances in Breſcia, and was taken fighting manfully, endeavouring to ſell his life as dear as he could. He was brought to Venice, and drowned by order of the ſtate.

The laſt act, in pathetic diſtreſs, is equal to any of the former. After Belvidera has wrought her father to compaſſion, and to a promiſe of ſaving the lives of the conſpirators, an interview between Acquilina and Antonio takes place, which fills up the time till Jaffier has been informed that Priuli had been unſucceſsful; but the obſcene traſh of the dialogue has long rendered it unfit for repreſentation, and it is now entirely left out. By theſe means, the ſcene is greatly precipitated. I remember that, about fifty years ſince, when I ſaw Venice Preſerved at Govent-garden, ſo much of Antonio's character was retained, as gave time to carry on the plot with ſome probability; and Hippiſley, in a ſoliloquy, where he diſplays the ridiculous eloquence of the character, entertained the audience long enough for preſerving the continuity of the ſcenes. At preſent, the immediate meeting of Belvidera and Jaffier, after her interview with Priuli, is too ſudden and abrupt.

It is impoſſible to read, much leſs to ſee repreſented on the ſtage, the parting-ſcene between the huſband and wife, without the deepeſt affliction. This man had more power over the heart than any writer of our nation, except, perhaps, Richardſon. The affright, poor Belvidera is thrown into by Jaffier's drawing his dagger, is ſucceeded by the bell which announces the execution of Pierre; and makes a fine picture of pity, diſtreſs, and terror!

Quin talked once of reſtoring the long-omitted ſcene of Pierre with the Prieſt, which followed that

that of Jaffier and Belvidera; but his better reflections taught him to pay reſpect to decency and the ſacred order.—The genius of the poet ſhines out to the laſt. The laugh of Pierre, interrupted by the agoniſing groan, with the madneſs of Belvidera, conclude this maſter-piece of Otway.

To Barry's good taſte we owe the abſence of the ghoſts of Jaffier and Pierre.—Belvidera ſees her huſband and his friend only in her diſtracted mind.

Otway's laſt play was the Atheiſt, a comedy of looſe intrigue and diſſolute manners. Beaugard's father ſeems to be copied from Dryden's Father Aldo, in his Limberham. This play was acted, by the principal comedians of the united companies, about a few months before the death of the author, and is totally unworthy of him; the ſame, I am afraid, muſt be ſaid of all his comedies.—Garrick, above thirty years ſince, revived his Soldier's Fortune; but, ſo changed were the manners of the times, that the actors, with Woodward at their head, were ſeverely treated by the audience.

The great reputation, which Otway gained by his Venice Preſerved, did not, it ſeems, mend his fortune. By his dedications to Lord Dorſet, we are aſſured of that nobleman's great generoſity to him.—Otway was, it ſeems, in Edmund Curl's caſe, who could not get daily bread without daily books; for he told his patron, that his daily bread depended on his daily buſineſs.* He had many patrons; and, amongſt the reſt, James Duke of York, who was remarkable for his firmneſs to thoſe who were attached to his intereſt. I am afraid we muſt attribute great part of his misfortunes to the diſſolute manners of the time; by the ſtrong current of which,

* Dedication of Friendſhip and Faſhion.

which, a man of an eaſy thoughtleſs diſpoſition, and ſtrongly addicted to ſocial pleaſures, is borne along inſenſibly. In a life of our author, publiſhed, with his works, about forty years ſince, the biographer tells us a melancholy ſtory of his extreme poverty; of his being reduced to the neceſſity of borrowing a ſhilling, to ſatisfy the cravings of his appetite, from a gentleman unknown to him; who, being ſhocked and ſurpriſed at the unexpected diſtreſs of the author of Venice Preſerved, put into his hand a guinea; that Otway was choked with a piece of bread which he immediately purchaſed. The day of his death, and place where he died, are fixed to the 14th of April, 1685, at a public houſe on Tower-hill.

But all lovers of genius will think themſelves indebted to Dr. Warton; who, from the papers of Dr. Spence, has proved the afflicting tale to be a fiction or miſinformation. Otway owed his death to an act of generous friendſhip. A friend of his had received a very groſs affront; the injurious perſon ſoon after withdrew to ſome part of the continent. Otway purſued him to demand ſatisfaction; in his return home, he was ſeized with a cold, which ended in a diſtemper that put a period to his life.*

Our author, while living, met with many enemies; of whom, in his dedications, prefaces, and prologues he frequently complains. The ſingular merit of his two beſt pieces was, in my opinion, the capital fault of which he was guilty, and not to be pardoned by his rivals. It is ſaid, that Dryden diſliked him on account of his friendſhip for Tom Shadwell: that, indeed, could not be a recommendation

* Warton's Obſervations on Pope, Vol. II.

dation to the laureat; but the involuntary tears, which were ſhed at his Orphan and Venice Preſerved, were the criminals that made him hateful to Dryden, whoſe ſcenes were never honoured with ſo heart-felt an approbation. This he never forgave till the great ſubduer of envy had eraſed his name from the number of the living. *When the wolf is full*, ſays Ben Jonſon, *he howls.**—The expreſſion is coarſe; but, I fear, the application is too juſt. When Otway was in his grave, Dryden ſpoke of him with tenderneſs, and lamented that he had not known him in an earlier period of his life. He then, and I believe not till then, acknowledged his ſuperior power in touching the heart.† It is to the credit of Otway and Shadwell, that the being of different parties cauſed no interruption to their friendſhip.

A wretched tragedy called Heroic Friendſhip, was printed in 1719. The editor had the aſſurance to aſſert that it was written by Otway; the public ſaw at once that it was an impudent forgery. The MS. was not in his hand-writing, nor was there in the compoſition a ray of genius.

The two principal characters of Venice Preſerved, Jaffier and Pierre, by Betterton and Smith, were much admired and applauded. Tenderneſs, friendſhip, and love, conflicting with rage, terror, and remorſe, were painted with the livelieſt colours, and ſhewn in the moſt ſtriking attitudes by the accompliſhed Betterton. Smith's perſon was commanding; and the ſpectators juſtified, by applauſe, the propriety of that line where he calls himſelf—

A fine, gay, bold-fac'd villain, as thou ſeeſt me.

And

* Sejanus, Act II.

† Dryden's preface to his Tranſlation of Freſnoy's Art of Painting.

And Bedamar's compliment:

> The poets who firſt feign'd a god of war,
> Sure propheſy'd of thee!

The figure of the actor ſhould ever, if poſſible, juſtify the poet's deſcription of the character. Garrick, who had ventured to act Pierre againſt Delane's Jaffier, refuſed the ſame part with Barry: 'I will not,' ſays Roſcius, 'bully the monument.' —The great Mrs. Barry's Belvidera was one of thoſe parts which obtained for her, as Downs ſays, the name of *famous Madam Barry*. The characters, which, this writer ſays, no man could ſee her act without being moſt tenderly affected, were Monimia, Belvidera, and Iſabella in the Fatal Marriage. To her ſupreme excellence, in theſe and other parts, ſhe owed a diſtinction unknown before to any comedian, a benefit-night, which ſhe alone enjoyed for ſeveral years; nor do I find, that even Betterton had that mark of public favour, till a year or two before his death.

About the year 1706, Wilks was caſt into the part of Jaffier; Mills, Pierre; and Mrs. Rogers, Belvidera. This, actreſs after ſtanding out a long ſiege of amorous courtſhip from Wilks, to ſave his life, as Cibber has it, ſhe at length yielded up the fortreſs. The iſſue of their loves was a daughter, afterwards married to Ch. Bullock, by approbation of Wilks. A gentleman, who publiſhed the life of Wilks ſoon after his deceaſe, gives us ſome odd anecdotes of the conſequences ariſing from the lover's infidelity. The lady's reſentment was wrought up to ſuch a degree, that, when they acted together the parts of Jaffier and Belvidera, from their cloſe embraces ſhe left viſible and bloody marks of her jealous reſentment. This, however painful to Wilks,

Wilks, was ſport to the audience; the play was, for this reaſon, frequented much. To behold this ſtrange perverſion of courtſhip, where love was turned into ſpite, and jealous rage took place of conjugal embraces, brought crouds of curious ſpectators.

Mills acted Pierre ſo much to the taſte of the public, that the applauſe, beſtowed on him, in this part, exceeded all that was given to his beſt efforts in every thing elſe. The actors joined their voices to that of the public: I confeſs, I never ſaw Mills in Pierre without a great degree of approbation. Why he and Quin wore a white hat in this part I could not learn.

The politics of the theatre ſtand upon the ſame baſis as thoſe of a ſuperior community. Intereſt and ambition equally occupy the inmates of a theatre and a court. The following anecdote is a picture of man at large.

Some time after Booth, by the intereſt of Lord Bolingbroke, had obtained a ſhare in the patent of Drury-lane; by putting himſelf into the part of Pierre, this eminent tragedian imagined he ſhould acquire reputation and applauſe, eclipſe the performance of Mills, and ſtrengthen the play; and perhaps revenge the affront Wilks had given him, by putting Mills conſtantly over his head, when in his power. One day, after rehearſal, he took an opportunity, in the preſence of Cibber, to propoſe this plan of giving a new vigour to Venice Preſerved. Wilks was ſo far from reliſhing the propoſal, that he threw down his part of Jaffier in a rage, and ſolemnly proteſted he would never act it again. Perhaps he imagined Booth would bear away the general applauſe; perhaps in the warmth of his temper, he thought that a blow was aimed at him and his friend, Mills, at the ſame time. But why

why ſhould we not rather attribute his conduct to a more generous motive? Mills was an honeſt man, and his valued friend; the depriving him of a character, in which he conſtantly gained the favour of the people, he might reaſonably conjecture, would lower his merit and leſſen him in his own eſteem. Booth, however vexed and diſappointed, like an able politician, ſuppreſſed his anger, and ſubmitted to act the part of Jaffier. He knew that Cibber would eſpouſe the cauſe of Wilks on all occaſions; for, however Colley may complain, in his Apology, of Wilks's fire and impetuoſity, he, in general, was Cibber's great admirer; he ſupported him on all occaſions, where his own paſſion or intereſt did not interpoſe; nay, he deprived the inoffenſive Harry Carey of the liberty of the ſcenes, becauſe he had in common with others, made merry with Cibber, in a ſong, on his being appointed poet laureat; ſaying, at the ſame time, he was ſurpriſed at his impertinence, in behaving ſo improperly to *a man of ſuch great merit.*

During Booth's inability to act, which laſted from 1729 till his death, 1733, Wilks was called upon to play two of his parts,—Jaffier, and Lord Haſtings in Jane Shore. Booth was, at times, in all other reſpects except his power to go on the ſtage, in good health, and went amongſt the players for his amuſement. His curioſity drew him to the play-houſe on the nights when Wilks acted theſe characters, in which himſelf had appeared with uncommon luſtre. All the world admired Wilks, except his brother-manager: amidſt the repeated burſts of applauſe, which he extorted, Booth alone continued ſilent.

If theſe two anecdotes are worth peruſal, the reader owes them to Benjamin Victor, who, many years ſince, related them to me.

Mrs

Mrs. Porter, I have ſaid, was the excellent ſcholar of Mrs. Barry. From the time this great actreſs quitted the ſtage, till the year 1732, Mrs. Porter, as far as I can learn, repreſented the part of Belvidera, and never failed deeply to affect every audience. Booth was no admirer of Oldfield's tragedy, but was in raptures with Porter in the ſcenes of Belvidera. Every ſituation of this amiable character this actreſs filled with all the fine paſſion which the tendereſt writer could inſpire. She exceeded particularly in her agony, when forced from Jaffier, in the ſecond act, and in the madneſs of the laſt.

In begging another embrace from Jaffier, when he is about to leave her for ever, her diſtreſs and anguiſh of mind were not to be deſcribed:

JAFFIER.

This—and no more. [Kiſſing her.]

BELVIDERA.

——— Another, ſure another, !
For that poor little one you've ta'en ſuch care of.
I'll give't him truly !

Nor ſhould I forget her delicate manner of putting him in mind of his appointment in the third act.—

Remember twelve !

At the theatre of Lincoln's-inn fields, and afterwards at Covent-garden, Venice Preſerved was ſupported by Ryan in Jaffier, Quin in Pierre, and Mrs. Seymour in Belvidera, who was ſucceeded by Mrs. Hallam.—Theſe actors ſupported this favourite play, for many years, againſt their powerful rivals of Drury-lane. Ryan was, I believe, in Jaffier, a copier of Powel, whoſe manner he caught when very young; an actor whom his maſter, Rich, preferred

preferred to all he had ever ſeen. Quin acted Pierre as he ſuppoſed Booth would have done. In diſplaying the ardour of the brave and gallant ſoldier, in the firſt ſcenes, he was not ſo happy as in uttering his reſentment of Jaffier's treachery in the fourth act.

Mrs. Seymour felt all the paſſions, and expreſſed them agreeably to their various powers, and in conformity to the action of the drama. In perſon ſhe was tall and well made, but grew large as ſhe advanced in life; her countenance was expreſſive,* and her voice pleaſing and flexible. Her Belvidera was amongſt thoſe characters that contributed to raiſe her reputation. — Mr. Ryan was ſo ſtrongly prejudiced in the opinion of Mrs. Seymour's merit, that, in a converſation I once had with him at the Bedford coffee-houſe, he aſſured me he thought her ſuperior to all the actreſſes he had ever ſeen. Though we ſhould think him too partial, in preferring Mrs. Seymour to Mrs. Oldfield and Mrs. Porter, yet ſurely ſhe muſt have had a large ſhare of merit to engage his judgment ſo ſtrongly in her favour.

Mr. Garrick, when fixed in the management of Drury-lane, for reaſons I have already adduced, reſigned Pierre, in which part his fire and ſpirit were not equally ſupported by grandeur and dignity of perſon, for Jaffier, which he acted with great and deſerved approbation many years. The temporary frenzy, with which Jaffier is ſeized, in the fourth act, on fancying that he ſaw his friend on the rack, has not ſince been equalled, nor perhaps ever will:

* Some idea of her features may be ſeen in Vertue's frontiſpiece to the tragedy of Mariamne.

——— He groans;
Hark how he groans! His ſcreams are in my ears
Already! See, they've fix'd him on the wheel!
And now they tear him! Murder! Perjur'd ſenate!
Murder!

The enthuſiaſtic power of Garrick preſented this dreadful image to the audience with ſuch aſtoniſhing force, that they trembled at the imaginary picture. In all the ſofter ſcenes of domeſtic woe, conjugal tenderneſs, and agonizing diſtreſs, Barry, it muſt be owned, was Garrick's maſter.

Moſſop's Pierre ſhould not be forgotten; his fine full-toned voice, and ſtrong expreſſion of ſentiment, gave uncommon ſpirit to the warmth and paſſion of the character. Though ſhort-ſighted, his eye ſeemed piercing, and big with what his mind conceived. In the interview with the Conſpirators, in the third act, he threw a gallantry into his action as ſtriking as it was unexpected. In this ſcene, I ſhould recollect, that, formerly, Pierre, after challenging the other Conſpirators, addreſſed himſelf to one of them in the following terms:

Or thou! with that lean, wither'd, wretched face!

And that an actor of a moſt unfortunate figure, with a pale countenance, ſtood up, with a half-drawn ſword, and raiſed a general laugh in the audience. The famous Tony Aſton, the itinerant comedian, was the laſt performer of this ridiculous part.

But Moſſop excelled greatly in the vehement reproaches, which, in the fourth act, he poured, with acrimony and force, on the treachery and cowardice of Jaffier. The cadences of his voice were equally adapted to the loudeſt rage and the moſt deep and ſolemn reflection, which he judiciouſly varied.

Mrs.

Mrs. Cibber was long the Belvidera of Barry and Garrick; her excellences are ſtill freſh in the memory of a public who loved and admired them. Every ſituation of Belvidera ſeemed to be formed on purpoſe to call forth her great ſkill in awakening the paſſions. Mrs. Yates and Mrs. Crawford were no mean competitors of Mrs. Cibber in this, as well as many other parts which require equal abilities.

Mrs. Siddons has, in Belvidera, as well as many other parts, not only attracted the attention, but abſolutely fixed the favour, of the town in her behalf. This actreſs, like a reſiſtleſs torrent, has borne down all before her. Her merit, which is certainly very extenſive, in tragic characters, ſeems to have ſwallowed up all remembrance of preſent and paſt performers; but, as I would not ſacrifice the living to the dead, neither would I break down the ſtatues of the honourable deceaſed to place their ſucceſſors on their pedeſtals. The fervour of the public is laudable; I wiſh it may be laſting, but I hope without that ingratitude to their old ſervants which will make their paſſion for Mrs. Siddons leſs valuable, as it will convey a warning to her, that a new face may poſſibly eraſe the impreſſion which ſhe has ſo anxiouſly ſtudied to form and ſo happily made. The perſon of Mrs. Siddons is greatly in her favour: juſt riſing above the middle ſtature, ſhe looks, walks, and moves, like a woman of a ſuperior rank. Her countenance is expreſſive; her eye ſo full of information, that the paſſion is told from her look before ſhe ſpeaks. Her voice, though not ſo harmonious as Mrs. Cibber's, is ſtrong and pleaſing; nor is a word loſt for want of due articulation, which the comedian ſhould always conſider as his firſt duty, and eſteem the fineſt conception of paſſion of no value with-

out it. She excels all perſons in paying attention to the buſineſs of the ſcene, her eye never wanders from the perſon ſhe ſpeaks to, or ſhould look at when ſhe is ſilent. Her modulation of grief, in her plaintive pronunciation of the interjection, oh! is ſweetly moving and reaches to the heart. Her madneſs, in Belvidera, is terribly affecting. The many accidents, of ſpectators falling into fainting-fits in the time of her acting, bear teſtimony to the effects of her exertions.

She certainly does not ſpare herſelf. — Neither the great nor the vulgar can ſay, that Mrs. Siddons is not in *downright earneſt*.

The actors have aſſured me, that the farces, which uſed to raiſe mirth in an audience after a tragedy, now fail of that effect from Mrs. Siddons's having ſo abſolutely depreſſed the ſpirits of the audience, that the beſt comic actors cannot recal them into mirth or vivacity.

I have ſaid, in the memoirs of Garrick, that Mrs. Crawford, in tragedy, knew the readieſt way to the heart, and I will not retract; I will add, farther, that her comic humour is not much inferior to her tragic ſpirit. Miſs Young's accompliſhments, in the ſame book, I honeſtly and heartily acknowledged. This winter will perhaps excite ſuch a laudable emulation amongſt the actors, that the town will, in all probability, be as well entertained as they ever have been ſince the retirement of our great Roſcius.

Mrs. Yates, I am informed, intends ſoon to quit the ſtage. The Engliſh theatre will long lament the loſs of an actreſs, whoſe juſt elocution, noble manner, warm paſſion, and majeſtic deportment, have excited the admiration of foreigners and fixed the affection and applauſe of Britons.

Before

Before I finiſh my remarks on the actors of Venice Preſerved, I think myſelf called upon to do juſtice to the merits of Mr. Brereton. All the tender and paſſionate ſituations of Jaffier it appears he had well ſtudied; for, in every attitude, he expreſſed them juſtly. He was particularly happy in that maſterly ſcene of varied paſſion and ſtrong agony, in the fourth act, with Belvidera. It will not be ſaying too much of Brereton's Jaffier, that even thoſe, who had been ſpectators of Garrick and Barry in the ſame character, could yet ſee him with pleaſure. I could wiſh an actor of Mr. Brereton's merit would avoid tones in ſpeaking which approach to ſomething like ſinging. Of Mr. Benſley's Pierre I ſhall only obſerve, that his perſon is more againſt him than his conception of the part, which is very juſt.

The following anecdote, of Quin and Dr. W———, I was told many years ſince. The former was at Bath when the latter lived with Mr. A———, whoſe niece he had married. It was thought a reſpect due to ſo eminent a man as Quin, for Mr. A—— to invite him to dinner. After the cloth was removed, the divine entered into converſation with the player on the ſuperior excellences of Shakſpeare. Quin acceded to all that he ſaid upon that topic, but begged to be heard a word or two in favour of Otway. He enlarged on his merits in the pathetic ſtyle; nay, in the ſatiric vein. 'How ſo, Mr. Quin?' ſaid the doctor.—He, looking archly on the great eagerneſs with which Mr. A——— ſwallowed every word of W———, pronounced emphatically the following paſſage in Venice Preſerved:

Honeſt

Honeſt men
Are the ſoft eaſy cuſhions on which knaves
Repoſe and fatten.*

Quin knew well enough, that, in acting, Garrick was the doctor's idol, a partiality he could not eaſily forgive; and, it is ſuppoſed, he bluntly embraced this opportunity to let him know his opinion of him. I muſt not forget to tell my readers, that old Jacob Tonſon purchaſed the copy-right of Venice Preſerved for *fifteen pounds!* What would ſuch another play be worth now?

* Act I. ſcene between Jaffier and Pierre.

Rival Queens,

OR

Alexander the Great.

CHAPTER XLII.

General opinion of the writer and his hero.—Addiſon.—Dryden and Lee.—Dryden's verſes.—Lee's ſtyle.—Alexander's character;—unfairly repreſented by Pope and Boileau.—Alexander a builder of cities and a promoter of commerce.—Mr. Holwell and the Brahmins.—Le Brun and Lee.—Compliment to the action of Hart.—Rymer's opinion of Hart.—Rocheſter.—King Charles's preference of Mohun.—Plain Dealer.—Pinchwife.—Characters acted by Hart and Mohun.—The latter not mentioned in an agreement.—Joe Haines and a clergyman.—Haines diſmiſſed by Hart.—Count Haines.—Tom Brown.—Dryden.—Anecdote of Haines, by Quin.—Hart and Nell Gwyn.—Biſhop Tenniſon and Queen Mary.—Lee's pathetic reading.—Time, when Hart and Mohun died, unknown.—Betterton's modeſty.—Mountfort.—Booth.—Delane.—Hulet.—His encounter with a chair.—His merits.—Cuſtom of hemming.—His ſudden death.—Quin's Clytus.—Mrs. Marſhall and Mrs. Corbet.—Barry, &c.

THE general opinion, of the writer of this play and of his hero, is not very favourable to either. Lee was a mad poet, it is ſaid, who deſcribed, in frantic

frantic verſe, the actions of a mad hero.—But it is the opinion of the ſober and judicious Addiſon, that, among our Engliſh poets, there was none who was better turned for tragedy than Lee, if, inſtead of indulging the impetuoſity of his genius, he had reſtrained it within proper bounds.—Of all the poets of his time, Dryden ſeems to have had the ſincereſt regard and firmeſt friendſhip for this writer. With him he joined in compoſing the tragedy of the Duke of Guiſe, and the more celebrated Oedipus. His copy of verſes, on the Rival Queens, contains, at once, a proof of warm affection and a fine apology for the exuberant ſtyle and extravagant flights of his friend:

Such praiſe is your's, while you the paſſions move,
That 'tis no longer feign'd, 'tis real love,
Where nature triumphs over wretched art;
We only warm the head, but you the heart.
Always you warm; and, if the riſing year,
As in hot regions, bring the ſun too near,
'Tis but to make your fragrant ſpices blow,
Which in our colder climates will not grow.

Your beauteous images muſt be allow'd
By all but ſome vile poets of the croud:
But how ſhould any ſign-poſt dauber know
The worth of Titian or of Angelo?

Notwithſtanding the fine poetic glow of friendſhip in theſe lines, and the ſedate deciſion of Addiſon, I am afraid we cannot read thirty lines together, even in Lee's beſt pieces, without encountering abſurdity in ſentiment and ſoleciſm in expreſſion: ——blunder and beauty are ſo blended together, you know not how to ſeparate them. His many turgid lines and incoherent thoughts make us admire his more happy and ſucceſsful efforts. Lee, by the

the warmth of his temper, carries every paſſion to extreme: his love is dotage, and his anger madneſs. However, it muſt be confeſſed, that, in ſeveral of his plays, ſuch as Mithridates, Theodoſius, L. Junius Brutus, and Alexander, there is ſtill enough to pleaſe, as well as to affect, the moſt critical audience. As long as the ſtage will be able to furniſh good actors for his Alexander, it will draw together all ranks of people, from the heroic lover, and the lady of high rank, to the loweſt of the people.

As to the hero himſelf, by the conſent of all eminent hiſtorians, he was the greateſt and the moſt generous of conquerors; nor muſt we regard the ſatire of Boileau and Pope as a genuine repreſentation of fact or character. The latter has ill coupled the conqueror of Aſia with the booriſh Charles: *From Macedonia's madman to the Swede.* You might as well put in compariſon the ſwift racer and the laborious cart-horſe. So have I heard Garrick, in an ill humour, put the merits of Barry and Sparks together, which were very diſſimilar.

Boileau goes farther than Pope; not ſatisfied with putting the conqueror of the world into a mad-houſe, he calls on the lieutenant de police to ſeize him and execute him as a felon:

Qu'on livre ſon pareil en France à la Reinie:
Dans trois jours nous verrons le phénix de guerriers
Laiſſer ſur l'échaffaut ſa tête et ſes lauriers.

In my opinion, Voltaire too ſeriouſly refutes the poet's rhapſody. Boileau might reaſonably have been aſked, whether his maſter, Louis XIV. could not be juſtly termed the *pareil* of his Alexander

der, whoſe ambition was leſs laudable than that of the Greek, becauſe founded on more ſordid motives. Let it not be forgotten, that Alexander, at a time of life ſubject to the turbulence of paſſion, and during the intoxication of conqueſt, founded and built more cities than all the other conquerors of Aſia had deſtroyed; and that the man, whom the poets treat as a fool and a madman, abſolutely changed and improved the commerce of the world. It is true, indeed, that our own Holwell, who lived thirty years among the bramins, and made himſelf maſter of their antient as well as modern language, aſſures, that their annals bear witneſs to the invaſion of their country by Alexander; and that, in their dialect, they call him *robber* and *murderer*. But theſe pacific people, Voltaire obſerves, had no other idea of a warrior; and it is believed they beſtowed the ſame titles on the kings of Perſia themſelves.

Lee, has artfully enough, contrived to inſert, in his tragedy, the moſt material events of Alexander's life: the death of Philotas, the paſſage of the Granicus, his conqueſts in India, his paſſion for Roxana, the death of Clytus, and many other tranſactions. Thoſe, who have ſeen Le Brun's picture of Alexander's paſſing the Granicus, will juſtify the animated deſcription of it which Cibber ſo improperly cenſures:

Can none remember! yes, I know all muſt,
When glory, like the dazzling eagle, ſtood
Perch'd on my beaver in the Granic flood!
When fortune's ſelf my ſtandard trembling bore,
And the pale fates ſtood frighted on the ſhore;
When the immortals on the billows rode,
And I myſelf appear'd the leading god!

Lee

Lee has, in the true ſpirit of poetry, clothed the beautiful and glowing figures of the pencil.

This tragedy was long the favourite of the court and city, eſpecially when acted, as originally, by Hart, Mohun, Mrs. Marſhall, Mrs. Boutell, and others.——Hart was ſo univerſally applauded in Alexander, that Downes has recorded a fine compliment paid him by a nobleman:—'That his action, in that character, was ſo excellent, that no prince in Europe need be aſhamed to learn deportment from him.' He adds, too, that, whenever Hart acted this part, the houſe was crowded as to a new play. The great critic, Rymer, declared, that ſuch was the enchanting force of Mr. Hart's action, ſuch his eaſe, grace, majeſty, and dignity, that he impoſed upon the ſpectator the worſt productions of the poet; who, from the accompliſhed behaviour of the actor, was deceived into an opinion of merit in the writer. Of Mohun I have already given Lord Rocheſter's opinion; which coming from one of a capricious temper, who often praiſed one man from pique or envy to another, I ſhould not ſo much rely on, if not confirmed by the general teſtimony. They were both great favourites of the king and courtiers. Sometimes, we muſt ſuppoſe, an emulation would be excited from a compariſon made of their ſeveral excellences. Charles, on ſeeing the performance of both in a new play, obſerved, to his courtiers, that Mohun, or Moon, as he pronounced it, ſhone, that day, like the ſun, and Hart like the Moon. The latter was, in perſon, taller, and more genteel in ſhape, than the former; he ſeems to have claimed the lead in choice of characters. From Mohun's generally acting grave, ſolemn, and auſtere parts, I ſhould have caſt him into

that of Manly in the Plain Dealer; but it ſeems Hart claimed it, and, to prove his right to it, addreſſed the audience in a plain-dealing prologue, full of ſevere cenſure on the pit.—— In the ſame author's Country Wife, Pinchwife, a part not unallied in humour to Manly, was acted by Mohun, and Horner by Hart. But theſe accompliſhed players were not confined to one walk, either in tragedy or comedy. Though Hart generally ſhone in the gay gentleman, ſuch as Dorimant and Loveleſs in Sir Fopling Flutter and the Scornful Lady, Mohun acted, to great advantage, the lively and volatile Valentine in Wit without Money. I ſuſpect, that theſe actors, who had been, from their youth, brought up almoſt together under two different maſters in the profeſſion of the ſtage, who had been fellow-ſoldiers in the cauſe of their royal maſter, and partners in the direction of the theatre, at laſt, by ſome unhappy difference, were alienated from each other; for, in the agreement, between Dr Davenant and Betterton on the one part, and Hart and Kynaſton on the other, in the year 1681, the name of Mohun is not mentioned; that he was alive at that time we know from his having acted a part in Southern's Perſian Prince, in 1682, before the two royal companies were united.

Hart was always eſteemed a conſtant obſerver of decency in manners and a reſpecter of the clergy. That witty but debauched droll, Joe Haines, had perſuaded a clergyman, into whoſe company he had introduced himſelf, that the players were a ſet of people who wiſhed to be reformed; and that he could recommend him to be chaplain to the theatre, with a handſome yearly income;

income; that he had nothing to do but to ſummon the company, by ringing a bell, to prayers every morning. This impudent trick was carried ſo far that the Clergyman was introduced by Haines, with a bell in his hand, behind the ſcenes, which he frequently rang, and cried out audibly, 'Players! players! come to prayers!' While Joe and ſome of the actors were enjoying this happy contrivance, Hart came into the theatre; and, ſeeing the parſon and his bell, ſoon found out the impoſition; he was extremely angry with Haines, whom he ſmartly reprehended, and invited the clergyman to dine with him; he ſoon convinced him that Haines was an improper companion for a man of his function. Haines and Mr. Hart could not by any means agree; the ſober management of the latter did not ſuit with the irregular and vicious conduct of the former. Haines, not ſubmitting to be governed by the eſtabliſhed rules of the king's theatre, was diſmiſſed, and ſoon after received into Betterton's company.* He was a wit and a great joker, and writer of prologues and epilogues, many of which he ſpoke himſelf. The famous one, pronounced on the back of an aſs, has often raiſed abundance of mirth, and was lately revived by ſome of our comedians; though I think the jeſt is now ſo worn out, that a new one might be formed at no great expence of brains. Haines travelled, over ſeveral parts of Europe, with a gentleman, who, to enjoy his drollery, bore his expences; this got him the name of Count Haines. Tom Brown celebrates Haines as a jolly toper; and employs him as a quack, in the infernal regions, to cure the

* Downs ſays, that, Haines having affronted Mr. Hart, he diſmiſſed him.

the diſorders of Erebus. Tom, likewiſe, from his envy or diſlike of Dryden, makes out a whimſical dialogue between him and Haines, where their ſeveral converſions to popery are diſcuſſed with ſome pleaſantry. From Haines's calling Dryden, ſeveral times in this dialogue, Poet *Squab*, a name originally given him by Rocheſter, we may gueſs at his make and form. By Dryden's ranking Haines with Oates, in the laſt line of his epilogue to the Pilgrim, revived for his ſon's benefit, it is evident he was diſpleaſed at being joined with this debauched player, and reſents the affront in terms by no means to the honour of Haines.——Speaking of ſtage-reformation, he ſays:

> In ſhort, we'll grow as moral as we can,
> Save here and there a woman and a man:
> But neither you nor we, with all our pains,
> Can make clean work; there will be ſome remains,
> While you have ſtill your Oates, and we our Haines.

Theſe, I believe, were the laſt lines which were written by this great poet, who died ſoon after; nor did Haines long ſurvive him. As I ſhall not have many opportunities to mention this odd character, I will here quote an anecdote relating to him; which I heard from the mouth of Mr. Quin, in the green-room of Covent-garden, the winter when he and Garrick were engaged at that theatre.

Mr. Garrick was informing the company, then preſent, of his acting the part of Oreſtes, in the Diſtreſſed Mother, in Dublin. 'In order,' ſaid he, 'to gain a more accurate knowledge of the character, I waited on the author, Ambroſe Philips, who lived not far from the metropolis. I begged him

him to inform me particularly concerning his intention in the mad-ſcene of Oreſtes. Philips told me, that, during his writing that part of the play, he was like a perſon out of his mind; that he was ſo carried away by his enthuſiaſtic rapture, that, when his friend, Mr. Addiſon came into the room, he did not know him; and that, as ſoon as he recovered from his fit, he ſaid to him,—'What Joe, is it you?'—'That,' ſaid Quin, 'was to let you know how familiar he was with Mr. Addiſon. And this puts me in mind, Mr. Garrick, of a ſtory I have heard related of a predeceſſor of our's, that witty and wicked rogue, Joe Haines. In the reign of James II. the court was buſy in making converts to the Roman Catholic faith, in which they had ſome ſucceſs.—Some of the new papiſts pretended to have ſeen viſions and dreamt dreams; and, amongſt the reſt, Joe Haines, who profeſſed himſelf a convert, declaring that the Virgin Mary had appeared to him. Lord Sunderland ſent for Joe, and aſked him about the truth of his converſion, and whether he had really ſeen the Virgin?—Yes, my lord, I aſſure you it is a fact.—How was it, pray?—Why, as I was lying in my bed, the Virgin appeared to me, and ſaid, *Ariſe, Joe!*—You lie, you rogue, ſaid the earl; for, if it had really been the Virgin herſelf, ſhe would have ſaid *Joſeph*, if it had been only out of reſpect to her huſband.'

Hart was the firſt ſucceſsful lover of the famous Nell Gwyn; and from a ſeller of oranges, brought her to the ſtage, where ſhe acted many years with the public applauſe. Her royal maſter, the indolent Charles, was ſo pleaſed with the charms of her converſation, that he more than ſhared his time between her and his miſtreſſes of high rank; nor

was

was he ever better pleaſed than with the agreeable dalliances and ſprightly witticiſms of the charming Nelly. Some years ſince, I ſaw, at Mr. Berenger's houſe, in the Mews, a picture of this lady, ſaid to be drawn by Sir Peter Lely; and ſhe appeared to have been extremely attractive. Charles with his laſt breath, recommended poor Nelly to his ſucceſſor. She was good-natured, friendly, and charitable. Dr. Tenniſon, her pariſh prieſt, preached her funeral-ſermon; and, when ſome ſtarch people objected to his promotion to the ſee of Canterbury on that account, the generous Queen Mary defended him; ſaying, at the ſame time, that Tenniſon was ſo honeſt a man, that ſhe believed all he ſaid of Mrs. Gwyn was true.

Hart, when he gave up his intereſt, in the king's theatre, to Dr. Davenant, and Mr. Betterton, ſtipulated for a weekly ſalary of forty ſhillings, which he did not long enjoy. The ſtone put an end to his life; but I cannot ſay, with any certainty, at what time.

Of this accompliſhed actor, the Tatler has preſerved a very juſt remark on acting; 'It was impoſſible,' he ſaid, 'that the player could ever act with grace, except he had forgotten that he was before an audience: till he was arrived at that, his motion, his air, his every ſtep and geſture, have ſomething in them which diſcovers he is under reſtraint, for fear of being ill received; or, if he conſiders himſelf as being in the preſence of thoſe who approve his behaviour, you ſee an affectation of that pleaſure run through his whole carriage.'

The great advantage, of playing an original character, is derived from the inſtructions of the author. From him the learning of the part muſt be communicated to his inſtrument, the player: if he is a maſter

maſter in his profeſſion, he will, in his turn, impart uſeful hints to the poet, which will contribute to the improvement of the ſcene. Mohun, who acted Clytus in Alexander, Cibber tells us, had ſo high an opinion of Lee's power in recitation, that he threw down a part in deſpair of acting it up to the pathos of Lee's reading it.

Mohun was an able ſecond to his friend, Hart, and equally admired for his great and profound knowledge in his profeſſion. He is celebrated, by Lord Rocheſter, as the great Æſopus of the ſtage. The dignity of his ſtep, ſaid his lordſhip, mimics could imitate, though they could not reach the ſublimity of his elocution. Cibber, who lived ſo near the times of Hart and Mohun, could poſſibly have collected ſomething relating to theſe eminent players worthy our notice; at preſent, we cannot even ſay when they were born and when they died. The time of Mohun's death is not more known than that of Hart.

Betterton, after the re-union of the companies, acted Alexander with as much eclat as any of *his* other characters. This accompliſhed and yet modeſt player, when rehearſing this character, was at a loſs to recover a particular emphaſis of Hart, which gave a force to ſome intereſting ſituation of the part; he applied, for information, to the players who ſtood near him. At laſt, one of the loweſt of the company repeated the line exactly in Hart's key. Betterton thanked him heartily, and put a piece of money in his hand as a reward for ſo acceptable a ſervice.

But Betterton, growing in years, ſoon reſigned this laborious part to Mountfort, of whoſe merits, in acting lovers and heroes, Cibber ſpeaks at large. On the unhappy murder of Mountfort, Betterton, ſays

ſays Cibber, reſumed Alexander, and threw unexpected luſtre on the part.——George Powell ſometimes acted this favourite hero of the ladies with applauſe: Keen was his Clytus. Booth was too accurate a ſcholar, it ſeems, to act the mad Alexander, and, in my opinion, loſt an opportunity of diſplaying, to advantage, the harmony of his voice, the vigour of his action, and the gracefulneſs of his deportment.

The play had lain dormant many years at all the theatres, when Mr. Delane, an actor from Dublin, in 1733, revived it, by his acting Alexander, with uncommon ſucceſs, at the theatre in Goodman's-fields; where it was repreſented, for many nights ſucceſſively, with much emolument to Mr. Giffard, the manager. Of Mr. Delane I have ſaid as much as I thought neceſſary to point out his abilities in the Life of Garrick, who certainly did this actor no ſervice by mimicking him in the famous ſimile of the boar and ſow in the Rehearſal. His voice and manner were ſo exactly imitated, that the audience enjoyed the repreſentation by repeated applauſe. Ch. Hulet acted Clytus with Delane at Goodman's-fields, as did Quin at Covent-garden. Hulet was apprentice to the famous Edmund Curl, the bookſeller, where he learned very early the art of ſtage-murders; for Charles, acting the part of Alexander in the kitchen, with an elbow-chair for his Clytus, in his fury, with a poker in his hand inſtead of a javelin, broke it to pieces with ſuch noiſe and violence,* that Curl, in the parlour, called out to know what was the matter: 'Nothing, ſir,' ſaid the apprentice, 'but Alexander has killed Clytus.'

Hulet,

* Chetwood.

Hulet, by his maſter's permiſſion, after he had ſerved two years of his apprenticeſhip, tried his fortune on the ſtage at Lincoln's-inn-fields theatre. Here he remained ſeveral years; and met with encouragement from the public, with the patronage of Quin; but, his income not equalling his expences, he embraced Mr. Giffard's offer of a larger ſalary; and acted, at Goodman's-fields, many principal characters: ſuch as Henry VIII. Falſtaff, Othello, King in the Mourning Bride, Clytus, and Caſſius in Julius Cæſar.

Hulet was an excellent Macheath; the ſongs in that part he ſang more agreeably than Walker. He was happy in a fine, ſtrong, clear, and melodious pipe; his being too ſenſible of this was the immediate cauſe of his death: he took an idle pleaſure in ſtealing unperceived on a perſon, and deafening him with a loud hem, to ſhew the ſtrength and firmneſs of his lungs. As he was practiſing this trick one morning at rehearſal, by an extraordinary effort he broke a blood-veſſel, which killed him in twenty-four hours. Honeſt Lyon, a good comic actor, and ſo remarkable for a retentive memory, that he could repeat a news-paper, with all the advertiſements, after reading it thrice over,* was preſent when this uncommon accident happened, and related it to me, many years ſince, with this addition: that Hulet, being much alarmed at the quantity of blood which iſſued from his mouth, was perſuaded to go home; two eminent phyſicians were ſent for immediately, who pronounced the caſe deſperate, and would not preſcribe.

Hulet

* Mr. H. Giffard gained a wager on a trial of Lyon's memory, by a repetition of a newſpaper and all its contents.

Hulet was extremely corpulent, ſuppoſed to be owing to his drinking large quantities of porter and ale. He was a great feeder, extremely indolent, careleſs of his dreſs, not to ſay ſordidly negligent of his perſon. In converſation he was lively and facetious, extremely good-natured, and a moſt excellent mimic; but this talent of imitation he never exerciſed to the diſadvantage of his fellow comedians. The public loſt this valuable actor in the thirty-fifth year of his age. Quin acted Clytus with approbation; but not in a manner more truly characteriſtic than Hulet. There was, in the latter's voice, more variety of tone, with ſtrength equal to that of his competitor.

The Vanquiſher of Aſia never appeared to more advantage in repreſentation, I believe, than in the perſon of Spranger Barry. He looked, moved, and acted the hero and lover, in a manner ſo ſuperior and elevated, that he charmed every audience that ſaw him; he gave new life and vigour to a play which had not been ſeen ſince the death of Delane. His addreſs to his favourite queen was ſoft and elegant, and his love ardently paſſionate; in the ſcene with Clytus, in his rage, he was terrible; and, in his penitence and remorſe, exceſſive. In his laſt diſtracting agony, his delirious laugh was wild and frantic, and his dying groan affecting.

William Powell had, from nature, many requiſites to exhibit with propriety and ſkill, lovers and heroes: his perſon and voice were well adapted to them; his ear was good, nor did he want any thing but time to bring his judgment to maturity. In Alexander he was certainly inferior to Barry; but his diſtance from that great actor was not diſgraceful. If we take into our account the very ſhort time he was on the ſtage, we ſhall be ſurpriſed at the great progreſs he made in the art he profeſſed.

The

The original Rival Queens, Mrs. Marſhall and Mrs. Boutell, were much celebrated, eſpecially the firſt, who acted Roxana. She excelled in characters of dignity, and in expreſſing the ſtrong emotions of the heart. The high ſentiments of honour, in many of her characters, were correſpondent to the dictates of her mind, and juſtified by her own private conduct. She was particularly admired in Roxolana, a character of heroic virtue, in one of Lord Orrery's plays.—— Aubrey de Vere, Earl of Oxford,* was ſo charmed with Mrs. Marſhall, that he purſued her in all the ſhapes a paſſionate and artful lover could aſſume. Diſtracted with the repulſes his love received, he determined to ſeize her, by force, as ſhe came from the playhouſe; but ſhe, being informed of his deſign, obtained a party of the king's guards to protect her. His lordſhip attacked her chair, but was repulſed. The adventure was ſpread over the town. The gentlemen, who claimed a ſort of right to behave with freedom to the females of the theatre, were angry and diſappointed; while the ladies were pleaſed, and much extolled the conduct of the ſtage heroine. The king himſelf interpoſed in her favour; and told the earl, that, although, by his own conduct, he had too much countenanced the vice, he thought it bad enough *with* the conſent of the fair; but that violence was unpardonable in a ſovereign, and ſtill more ſo in a ſubject. The earl promiſed to think no more of her; but, in a few days, he renewed his addreſſes, aſſuring her he could not live without her; he was ſo charmed, he ſaid, with her exalted virtue, that he had reſolved, with her conſent,

* Hiſtory of the Engliſh Stage, 1741.

conſent, to marry her. This bait Roxalana ſwallowed; and the earl was married to her by his coachman in the dreſs of a clergyman. Soon after this pretended marriage, he took off the maſk, told her the deceit, and bade her return to the ſtage. She threw herſelf at the king's feet, who commanded the earl to allow her a yearly income of 500l. nor would he permit his lordſhip to marry during the life of her ſon by him. The time of Mrs. Marſhall's leaving the ſtage, and her death, is equally uncertain.

* Mrs. Boutell, the original Statira, was low in ſtature, had very agreeable features, a good complexion, with a childiſh look. Her voice was not ſtrong, but pleaſing and mellow; ſhe generally acted tender and innocent young ladies. By the generoſity of her lovers, ſhe was enabled to quit the ſtage before the approach of old age. A quarrel, between her and Mrs. Barry, after the union of the companies, concerning a veil, which the latter claimed for Roxana, and the other as ſtrenuouſly demanded for Statira, had like to have proved of fatal conſequence to the latter. She by the contrivance or intereſt of the wardrobe-keeper, carried off the veil triumphantly. The Rival Queens acted with much ſpirit and animoſity. In the laſt act, Roxana ſtruck Statira with ſuch force, when ſhe wounded her with the dagger, that it entered a quarter of an inch into the fleſh. As it was well known theſe ladies were not veſtals, it was reported jealouſy gave force to the blow.†

Alexander's death is attributed, in the play, to poiſon;

* Hiſtory of the Engliſh Stage, 1741.

† Mrs. Crawford was ſo much in earneſt, when ſhe ſtabbed Dionyſius, in the Grecian daughter, that Palmer felt the effects of the blow ſome months after.

poiſon; but, with more probability, we may place it to drunkenneſs.—The hero drank, at once, a cup which held fourteen pints: as he was attempting to mend his draught, by another equal quantity, he was ſeized with giddineſs, and, ſoon after, died. †

In Lee's dedication of his Alexander, to the Earl of Mulgrave, we have a glaring, but genuine picture, of the manners of the age, from one who was a ſharer in all its follies and irregularities:

—— 'An age, whoſe buſineſs is ſenſeleſs riot, Neronian gambols, and ridiculous debauchery; an age, which can produce few perſons, like your lordſhip, who dare be alone. All our hot hours are burnt in night-revels, or drowned by day in dead ſleep.' This was written in 1677.

Lee tried his fortune on the ſtage, in the character of Duncan, in Macbeth, but failed. Otway, much about the ſame time, played a King in one of Mrs. Behn's plays; 'but the ſight of the audience ſo terrified him,' ſays Downs, 'that he was in a tremendous agony, and ſpoilt for an actor.'

† Athenæus.

CHAP.

The Rehearſal.

CHAP. XLIII.

Middle comedy.—Buckingham's acquaintance with Ben Jonſon.—An admirer of the old actors.—His oppoſition to the new taſte in writing plays.—Play of the United Kingdoms.—The Rehearſal, when firſt acted.—Sir Robert Howard.—Simile of the turtles;—boar and ſow.—The family of Howard.—Original actor of Bayes.—Dryden's dreſs.—Buckingham and Dorſet.—Joe Haines's Bayes, with the recantation-prologue.—Eſtcourt, companion of Addiſon, &c.—His Bayes.—Old bill of the Rehearſal,—Heigh ho!—Eſtcourt's qualities.—Colley Cibber and the public at variance.—Weſton.—Steele's character of Eſtcourt.—Remarks on Steele.—Mimics more dreaded than beloved.—Garrick and Foote.—Paſſage in the Spectator reſtored.—Dr. Ratcliffe.—Secretary Craggs and Sir Godfrey Kneller.—The Bayes of Colley Cibber.—Pope and Gay.—Bayes of Theophilus Cibber;—of Garrick;—of Foote.—How Buckingham loſt the favour of Charles II.—*Joe Aſhe, the box-keeper.—Anecdotes of Buckingham.*

THIS comedy, or farce of five acts, is of the ſame ſpecies with the middle comedy of the Greeks, in which characters of living perſons are introduced with ſuch attributes as make them known to the audience. Of this kind was the Poetaſter of Ben Jonſon, and the Satiro-maſtix of Decker; moſt, if not all, of Mr Foote's pieces are of the ſame ſort.

George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, the writer of this witty ſatire, was, when a boy, acquainted

quainted with Ben Jonſon. He imbibed an early taſte and regard for our beſt old dramatic poets, eſpecially for Ben himſelf, and Beaumont and Fletcher; the name of Shakſpeare I do not ſee in any part of his writings. He likewiſe was much prejudiced in favour of the comedians who acted at the Globe and Black Friers, whom he ſaw before the commencement of the civil wars; theſe he greatly admired and praiſed; they had ſtruck his young fancy, and he preferred them to ſucceeding actors.

Soon after the Reſtoration, a great number of plays were written upon a new model; in which all reſemblance of humanity was forgotten, probability was thrown out of ſight, and monſtrous births took the place of ſuch productions as were founded on truth and nature. Buckingham, by his own perſonal oppoſition, and his intereſt with ſeveral gentlemen who were of high rank, tried to ſtem the torrent of high-flown nonſenſe and low ribaldry, which was the reigning taſte. He once ventured ſo far, in exploding a play, written by the honourable Henry Howard, eldeſt ſon to the Earl of Berkſhire, called the United Kingdoms, that he ran the hazard of his life. This play having in it a funeral, Mr. Bayes ridicules it in that part of the Rehearſal where he informs his friend, Johnſon, that, as he would have no ſcenes alike in his play, the laſt act beginning with a witty ſcene, the next ſhould begin with a funeral. Mr. Howard's play was abſolutely condemned, and the author was prudent enough not to print it, by which he eſcaped all farther animadverſion.

The Rehearſal was begun about the year 1663, and finiſhed ready for acting two years after. The plague, in 1665, prevented its repreſentation, ſo

that it did not make its appearance till 1671; then it came out with conſiderable alterations and improvements. The author, in his original plan, intended to have made Sir Robert Howard the principal character, by the name of Bilboa. But the great reputation of Dryden, who ſucceeded Sir W. Davenant in his office of poet-laureat, gave his grace a fair opportunity to expoſe the turgid rants and unmeaning bombaſt ſo frequent in the early dramatic works of that eminent writer.

The ſucceſs of this ſatire more than anſwered the expectation of the author; and indeed the Rehearſal is a very ſingular compoſition; in one reſpect it is like Don Quixote, for it is acted and read with pleaſure, though the abſurdities ridiculed in it are no longer in being. For eaſy wit, gay ridicule, ſtrong burleſque, and happy parody, our language can boaſt nothing like it. Such is the power of ridicule, it can make that appear a ſubject for laughter which is really in itſelf not ſo.

The parody of Dryden's ſimile of the turtles, *in* the ſecond part of his Conqueſt of Granada, is a ſtrong inſtance of the powers of ludicrous wit. As I ſhall not trouble my reader with many quotations from a play which is in every body's hands, I ſhall only give the ſimile and the parody upon it.

So two kind turtles, when a ſtorm is nigh,
Look up and ſee it gathering in the ſky;
Each calls his mate to ſhelter in the groves,
Leaving in murmurs their unfiniſh'd loves;
Perch'd on ſome dropping branch, they ſit alone,
And coo, and hearken to each other's moan.

The parody:

So boar and ſow, when any ſtorm is nigh,
Snuff up and ſee it gathering in the ſky;

Boar

Boar beckons ſow to trot in cheſnut-groves,
And there conſummate their unfiniſh'd loves.
Penſive, in mud, they wallow all alone,
And ſnort and gruntle to each other's moan.

Dryden put the beſt face on the matter, and endeavoured to laugh at the groteſque picture drawn for him; but, though he was wiſe enough to conceal his wound, he felt the ſmart of it. The revenge he took, in the character of Zimri, in his Abſalom and Achitophel, which he drew for the author of the Rehearſal, is a proof that he was thoroughly angry.

Though Dryden's extravagant flights, in dramatic poetry, were chiefly aimed at in the Rehearſal, yet many authors of the times had a juſt claim to their ſhare of ſatirical reprehenſion. The noble family of Howard was diſtinguiſhed for dramatic productions, in which were to be found plots romantic and abſurd, and characters, not drawn from nature, but wild and ungoverned fancy. To revive, in this place, the names of theſe exploded pieces, would be invidious; thoſe, whoſe curioſity may be excited to know them, will turn to the Key of the Rehearſal.

The original actor of Bayes was the celebrated John Lacy, a man of infinite comic humour, if we can truſt to honeſt Downs and all traditional remembrance of him. How this character was dreſſed by Lacy is not now to be known. Dryden, it was ſaid, was fond of wearing black velvet; and we may ſuppoſe the player endeavoured to reſemble him, as near as poſſible, in dreſs and deportment. I have heard, indeed, that the Duke of Buckingham and the Earl of Dorſet prevailed on Dryden to accompany them, in the boxes, on the firſt night of acting the Rehearſal; and placed the poet between them to enjoy the feelings of his mind

during the exhibition of his own picture. The peculiarities of Dryden, when he inſtructed the players, ſeems to be ſtrongly marked through the whole piece.

The immediate ſucceſſor of Lacy, in Bayes, is unknown. Joe Haines, on his return from his travels, acted Bayes; and ſpoke a recantation-prologue, in a white ſheet, with a burning taper in his hand, upon his admittance into the play-houſe after his return from the church of Rome. This prologue was written by Tom Brown, for his friend Joe Haines. A few lines of this addreſs to the public, by that pious penitent, will, I believe, ſatisfy the reader:

As you diſlike the converts of the nation,
That went to Rome and left your congregation,
By the ſame rule, pray, kindly entertain
Your penitent loſt ſheep return'd again.
For re-converted Haines, taught by the age,
Is now come back to his primitive church, the ſtage.
I own my crime, of leaving in the lurch
My mother-playhouſe:—ſhe's my mother-church!

The celebrated Dick Eſtcourt, the companion of Addiſon, Steele, Parnel, (who honoured him, in a Bacchanalian poem, by the name of Jocus,) and all the learned and choice ſpirits of the age he lived in, acted Bayes during the government of the theatre by Wilks, Dogget, and Cibber. There cannot be a ſtronger proof, of the old cuſtom of diſtributing the parts in a play according to the ſtrength of the company, before the introduction of thoſe exotics, the pantomimes, than the following bill of theatrical fare, which I produce from the firſt edition of the Spectator, publiſhed in numbers:

The part of Bayes by Mr. Eſtcourt; Johnſon by

by Mr. Wilks; Smith, Mr. Mills; Prettyman, Mr. Powel; Volſcius, Mr. Cibber; the Kings of Brentford, Bullock and Bowen; Gentleman-uſher, Pinkethman; Phyſician, Croſs; Tom Thimble, Dogget; Fiſherman, Johnſon; Pallas, Bullock; Heigh ho! Norris.

Here we have all the beſt comedians of the age grouped in this comedy; and Norris, an excellent comic genius, the ſpeaker of two lines only:

Heigh ho! heigh ho! what a change is here! Hey day! hey day! I know not what to do nor what to ſay!

This odd ſoliloquy he uttered in ſuch a manner, as to occaſion his being termed by the audience, and announced in the bills, by the name of Heigh ho!

The original actor of this drowſy politician was one Shirley, and quoted by that name in the play. This man cauſed the whole audience to gape and yawn. He ſeems to have made himſelf, like William Peer, mentioned in the Spectator, famous for ſpeaking a line or two.

Eſtcourt was ſo remarkable a genius, ſo celebrated for ready wit, gay pleaſantry, and a wonderful talent in mimicry, that ſomething more than barely mentioning him is due to his memory; more eſpecially as he was a man as much beloved for the goodneſs of his heart as admired for his various talents

With reſpect to his ſtage-abilities, Colley Cibber ſpeaks of them, in his Apology, but ſlightingly. He confeſſes indeed that Eſtcourt underſtood a character well, though he had not, he ſaid, acquired the art to do juſtice to it in the repreſentation; he inſtances particularly Falſtaff. But Cibber and the public ſeemed widely to have differed; for Eſtcourt's name is often placed in the bills for characters of conſequence, at a time, too, when

Cibb-

Cibber was a manager of the theatre. Nay, we ſee, that ſuch was the confidence of the directors of the ſtage in his powers to pleaſe the public, that Cibber, who afterwards played Bayes, contented himſelf, during the life of Eſtcourt, with the inferior part of Prince Volſcius. He was the original Serjeant Kite in the Recruiting Officer, Pounce in the Tender Huſband, and of other parts of importance. Cibber, I doubt not, mixed a degree of envy in his criticiſm. Of a player's merits the public is a fairer judge than the moſt enlightened of his own profeſſion. How often have I heard the merits of poor Weſton queſtioned by actors of no mean capacity, when the people could never ſee him, on the ſtage, without paying him the tribute of what Cibber juſtly calls unbought applauſe, loud and involuntary laughter!

Honeſt Downs calls Eſtcourt *hiſtrio natus*. 'He has the honour,' ſays this hiſtorian, '(nature enduing him with an eaſy, free, unaffected, mode of elocution,) in comedy, always to lætificate his audience, eſpecially the quality.

Sir Richard Steele, who thought it not beneath him to be the intimate friend of Eſtcourt, has, in the Spectator,* drawn a moſt amiable picture of him. I ſhall quote ſome ſtriking traits of his abilities: 'He had ſo exquiſite a diſcerning of what was defective in any object before him, that, in an inſtant, he could ſhew you the ridiculous ſide of what would paſs for beautiful and juſt, even to men of no ill judgment, before he had pointed at the failure. He was no leſs ſkilful in the knowledge of beauty; and I dare ſay, that there is no one, who knew him well, but can repeat more well-turned

* Vol. VI. Number 468.

turned compliments, as well as ſmart repartees, of Mr. Eſtcourt, than of any other man in England. This was eaſily to be obſerved in his inimitable faculty of telling a ſtory; in which he would throw in natural and unexpected incidents, to make his court to one part, and rally the other part of the company; then he would vary the uſage he gave them, according as he ſaw them bear kind or ſharp language. He had the knack to raiſe up a penſive temper, and mortify an impertinently gay one, with the moſt agreeable ſkill imaginable.'

Steele farther obſerves, that it is natural for the wealthy to affix the character of the man to his circumſtances; and to this alone he thought it was to be aſcribed, that a quick wit in converſation, a nice judgment on any emergency, a moſt blameleſs and inoffenſive behaviour, could not raiſe this man above being received upon the foot only of contributing to mirth and diverſion.

Steele did not conſider, that the man, who excels his company in wit and in the art of converſing, raiſes up ſo many rivals and enviers, who have nothing to conſole them but the low fortune of him who triumphs over their inferiority. Eſtcourt, very imprudently, I think, about a year before his death, opened a tavern *.—This enlarged his acquaintance, and, I believe, ſhortened his days: he, that ſells wine and prepares dinners, is at the call of every company that viſits his houſe. To ſome of theſe, the wit and gaiety of Eſtcourt might be agreeable; others would feel the degradation of themſelves in the ſuperior qualities of the tavern man. Let us quote what Steele ſays of his ſuperlative excellence in mimicry.

* The Bumper tavern, in Covent-garden.

mimicry. 'What was peculiarly excellent in this memorable companion was, that, in the accounts he gave of perſons and ſentiments, he did not only hit the figure of their faces and manner of their geſtures, but he would, in his narrations, fall into their way of thinking; and this, when he recounted paſſages wherein men of the beſt, as well as ſuch wherein were repreſented men of the loweſt, rank in underſtanding. It is certainly as great an inſtance of ſelf-love, to a weakneſs, to be impatient of being mimicked, as any can be imagined. There were none but the vain, the formal, the proud, or thoſe who were incapable of amending their faults, that dreaded him; to others he was in the higheſt degree pleaſing.'

The people, who dreaded Eſtcourt and all mimics, were the greateſt part of mankind; and by ſuch this man muſt have lived or ſtarved. The ſelect few, that were pleaſed with him, and had conquered their fear of his imitations, had ſuperior excellences to cheriſh their ſelf-love, and could look down with complacency on the inferior talents of their merry companion. Steele congratulates himſelf on the conqueſt he had gained over his impatience of being mimicked by Eſtcourt. 'The victory was not very eaſy, I dare believe; for I never in my life ſaw any man bear the trial with Chriſtian patience. Nay, the great takers-off themſelves could not endure the retort courteous of mimicry in another.—Garrick and Foote, the great maſters of the art, could not endure to ſee themſelves in the very mirror they held up to others.

Eſtcourt was a favourite of the great Duke of Marlborough; thoſe, who know his grace's cha-

racter,

racter, will not be ſurpriſed that he did not improve his fortune by that diſtinction. When providore of the beef-ſteak club, compoſed of the chief wits and greateſt men of the nation, he wore their badge, which was a ſmall gridiron of gold, that hung about his neck with a green ſilk ribbon.

In the later editions of the Spectator, Steele concludes his account of Eſtcourt with a flow of tenderneſs very natural to a good heart, and a burſt of tears: —— 'I wiſh it were any honour to the pleaſant creature's memory, that my eyes are too much ſuffuſed to let me go on.' In the original edition, the concluſion ſtands thus: 'It is a felicity his friends may rejoice in, that he had his ſenſes, and uſed them as he ought to do, in his laſt moments. It is remarkable, that his judgment was in its calm perfection to the utmoſt article; for, when his wife, out of her fondneſs, deſired ſhe might ſend for a certain illiterate humoriſt, (whom he had accompanied in a thouſand mirthful moments, and whoſe inſolence makes fools think he aſſumes from conſcious merit,) he anſwered,——You may do what you pleaſe, but he won't come.——Let poor Eſtcourt's negligence about this meſſage convince the unwary of a triumphant empiric's ignorance and inhumanity.

The triumphant empiric, I believe, was Dr. Ratcliffe. In this manner did the ſtaunch whig, Sir Richard, diſcharge his party-ſpleen on the high-tory doctor; nor indeed could any thing be ſaid too ſeverely againſt the phyſician, who refuſed to attend the man in his ſickneſs who had ſo often contributed to raiſe his mirth while in full health. That Ratcliffe was the perſon meant is

only conjecture; but the character of *humoriſt* confirms me in my opinion; for Ratcliffe would go to thoſe only his preſent fancy approved; nor would he ſtir to a lord, or even a crowned head, till his pipe was out *. Before I quit Eſtcourt, I muſt relate an anecdote, which will perhaps ſtrengthen what I have ſaid relating to mimicry. Secretary Craggs, when very young, in company with ſome of his friends, went, with Dick Eſtcourt, to Sir Godfrey Kneller; and told him, that a gentleman in company would give ſuch a repreſentation of ſome great men, his friends, as would ſurpriſe him. Eſtcourt mimicked Lord Somers, Lord Halifax, Godolphin, and others, ſo very exactly, that Sir Godfrey was highly delighted and laughed heartily at the joke. Craggs gave the wink, and Eſtcourt mimicked Kneller himſelf; who cried out immediately, *Nay, there you are out, man! by G—, that is not me!*

Cibber ſucceeded Eſtcourt in Bayes; and, by a ſtroke of ſatire which he threw into the part, provoked the vengeance of Pope, who never forgave it. It ſeems, the farce of Three Hours after Marriage, ſaid to be written by Pope, Gay, and Arbuthnot, had been acted, ſoon after the acceſſion of George I. with ſo little ſucceſs, that Cibber and Oldfield had been ſeverely handled by the audience. Our late king, George II. then Prince of Wales, commanded the Rehearſal; and Colley could not forbear ridiculing one of the moſt unfortunate incidents in Three Hours after Marriage, which was the introducing into a phyſician's

* We may juſtly ſtyle that man a humoriſt, who told King William he would not have his two legs for his three kingdoms, nor would attend Queen Anne in her laſt illneſs.

ſician's houſe two lovers of his wife in the ſhapes of a mummy and a crocodile. Though Pope, from an irritable temper, carried his reſentment too far, yet ſurely Cibber ſhould have remembered, both as a player and manager, he ought not to have inſulted the work of any author; it was ſufficient mortification to him that the audience had condemned it. Mr. Pope was, we will grant Cibber, too intemperate in his language on the occaſion; but Cibber's upbraiding him with his form, in the following words,——'Mr. Pope, you are ſo particular a man, that I ſhould be aſhamed to return your language as I ought to do,——was very groſs and utterly unjuſtifiable. I have heard, that Mr. Gay reſented the affront ſo ſtrongly, that he replied to Cibber in ſomething more feeling than words.

In acting Bayes, Colley Cibber was dreſſed like a ſmart coxcomb. In the delineation of the character, he made him ſufficiently ridiculous; but I thought he rather exhibited the laughter at Bayes's extravagances than the man that was enamoured of them.

His ſon, Theophilus, diſplayed more vivacity in Bayes than his father; by the invention of new-raiſed troops, or hobby-horſes, and other novelties, with ſome freſh jokes upon the actors, he drew the public to it for three weeks ſucceſſively. But Theophilus mixed too much grimace and falſe ſpirit in his beſt-acted parts.

Mr. Garrick, when he firſt exhibited Bayes, could not be diſtinguiſhed from any other gay well-dreſſed man; but he ſoon altered it to a dreſs he thought more ſuited to the conceit and ſolemnity of the dramatic coxcomb. He wore a ſhabby, old-faſhioned coat, that had formerly been very

very fine; a little hat, a large flowing brown wig, high-topt ſhoes with red heels, a mourning ſword, ſcarlet ſtockings, and cut-fingered gloves.

The difference, between Garrick and his immediate predeceſſors, was very conſpicuous. They, by their action, told the ſpectators that they felt all the ridicule of the part; he appeared quite ignorant of the joke made againſt him. They ſeemed to ſneer at the folly of Bayes, *with* the audience; the audience laughed loudly *at* him. By ſeeming to underſtand the ſatire, they caught at the approbation of the pit; he gained their loudeſt plaudits, without letting them know he deſerved it. They were in jeſt; he was in earneſt.

I have already ſaid ſo much of Mr. Garrick's imitations of the actors, in voice and geſture, that I cannot add any thing more on that head.

The Bayes of Foote was an odd mixture of himſelf and the Duke of Buckingham; the old building was new-faced with a modern front. He contrived to adapt, as well as he could, his new ſuperſtructure to the old ground-work. His fancy was ſo exuberant, his conceptions ſo ready, and his thoughts ſo brilliant, that he kept the audience in continual laughter. Public tranſactions, the flying follies of the day, debates of grave aſſemblies, abſurdities of play-writers, politicians, and players, all came under his cognizance, and all felt the force of his wit; in ſhort, he laid hold of every thing and every body that would furniſh merriment for the evening. Foote could have written a new Rehearſal equal to the old.

Of Buckingham's moral and political character I have ſpoken fully, and, I am convinced, juſtly, in

in my obſervations on the Orphan. I there gave the reader ſome account of the great affection which Charles II. manifeſted for this eccentric wit. It now remains that I unfold the cauſe which diſſolved the ſeemingly inviolable attachment of the king to his favourite. The parliament, which had been firm to Charles whilſt they had the leaſt proſpect of his adhering to the conſtitution, in church and ſtate, as then eſtabliſhed, on diſcovering that his war with Holland was carried on with no other view than to eſtabliſh deſpotiſm, and to ruin, in conjunction with France, the Proteſtant intereſt and religion, boldly broke through all forms, and attacked his miniſtry, compoſed of the famous Cabal. Buckingham deſired he might have leave to vindicate himſelf before the houſe of commons. In his defence, he laid the blame of his conduct on the king and the duke of York, by a witty alluſion to them both. Amongſt other things, he ſaid, 'hunting was a good diverſion; but, if a man would hunt with a brace of lobſters, he would have but ill ſport.' People underſtood, that, by the lobſters, the royal brothers were meant. 'And this ſpeech,' ſays Burnet, 'loſt him the king's favour ſo effectually, that he never recovered it afterwards.' Thus we ſee, that a man of wit, and maſter of the joke, could ſafely offend againſt all laws human and divine, and yet retain his ſovereign's favour; but, the moment he placed his conduct in a light that rendered it an object of ridicule, the royal countenance is withdrawn from him, and irreconcileable hatred ſucceeds to the appearance of the moſt unalterable friendſhip! It is well known, that Buckingham ſpoke often of the king moſt contemptuouſly; nor did Charles value the

duke

duke for any thing but the happy talent of giving a ludicrous turn to every thing that was ſerious.

In a letter to Lord Berkley, Buckingham deſired him to tell a certain lady, that he had reſolved to ſwear by no other than Joe Aſh; 'and, if that,' ſaid his grace, 'be a ſin, it is as odd an one as ever ſhe heard of.' Joe Aſh was, it ſeems, a box-keeper at Drury-lane play-houſe. How this man could merit this diſtinction I know not, unleſs he lent the duke money to ſupply his neceſſities, which were often very urgent. Box-keepers, whatever they may be now, by the managers keeping an eye over their conduct, were formerly richer than their maſters. A remarkable inſtance of it I heard many years ſince. Colley Cibber had, in a prologue, or ſome part of a play, given ſuch offence to a certain great man in power, that the playhouſe, by order of the lord-chamberlain, was ſhut up for ſome time, Cibber was arreſted, and the damages laid at ten thouſand pounds. Of this misfortune Booth and Wilks were talking very ſeriouſly, at the playhouſe, in the preſence of a Mr. King, the box-keeper; who aſked if he could be of any ſervice, by offering to bail Cibber.—'Why, you blockhead,' ſays Wilks, 'it is for ten thouſand pounds.'—'I ſhould be very ſorry,' ſaid the box-keeper, 'if I could not be anſwerable for twice that ſum.' The managers ſtared at each other; and Booth ſaid, with ſome emotion, to Wilks, 'What have you and I been doing, Bob, all this time? A box-keeper can buy us both.'

An anecdote or two of the witty writer of the Rehearſal, and I have done. Father Petre promiſed K. James to make a convert of Buckingham to popery. He began by attacking the imagination in its weakeſt part, fear: 'We, my lord,' ſaid the Jeſuit,

Jeſuit, 'deny that any can poſſibly be ſaved out of our church; your grace allows that our people may be ſaved.'—'No, curſe you! ſaid the duke, 'I make no doubt but you will be all damned to a man.' At this Father Petre ſtarted, and ſaid very gravely, 'I cannot argue with a perſon ſo void of all charity.'—'I did not expect, my reverend father,' ſaid the duke calmly, 'ſuch a reproach from you, whoſe whole reaſoning was founded on the very ſame inſtance of want of charity in yourſelf.'

The Duke of Queenſbury, in his journey to Scotland, heard that Buckingham lay at a certain inn, not many miles from the road, in an illneſs from which he could not recover. His grace charitably paid the ſick man a viſit, and aſked him if he would have a clergyman. I look upon them,' ſays Buckingham, 'to be a parcel of ſilly fellows, who do not trouble themſelves about what they teach.' Queenſbury then aſked, if he would have *his* chaplain, who was a preſbyterian. 'No,' ſaid Bucks, 'theſe fellows always made me ſick with their whine and cant.' Queenſbury, taking it for granted that he muſt be of ſome religion, and, of conſequence, a Roman Catholic, told him there was a popiſh lord in the neighbourhood, a[illegible] him if he ſhould ſend for a prieſt. '[illegible] the dying man,' theſe raſcals eat God; [illegible] know of any ſet of fellows that eat the [illegible] ſhould be obliged to you if [illegible] one of them.' *

I muſt not forget, that [illegible] Mountford, the female Prote[illegible]

* Richardſon.

ſumed all characters and became them all, acted Bayes with vivacity and humour; and that Mrs. Clive, ſome forty years ſince, attempted the ſame part for the benefit of her brother, Mr. Raſtor; but the public thought Bayes in petticoats, in a lively farce of her own writing, became her much better.

Congreve.

Congreve.

OLD BATCHELOR, &c.

CHAP. XLIV.

Congreve formed upon Wycherly.—Conduct of his fables.—Papiſts and Diſſenters.—Wycherly tranſcribed the manners of the times.—King, court, and poets, pimps combined.—Dryden's opinion of court and poets.—Wycherly's private character.—Old Batchelor;—its characters.—Cuckold a favourite diſh.—Lord Kaims.—Double Dealer;—Dryden's verſes upon it.—Dedication of the Double Dealer.—A leaſh of cuckolds.—Maſkwell.—Lady Touchwood.—Lord Froth.—Lord Plauſible.—Froth's opinion of laughter.—Lord C.—Various ſpecies of laughter.—Dimplers and ſmilers.—Houſe of commons and the theatre.—Lady Froth and Briſk.—Woodward and Mrs. Clive.—Miſs Pope.—Mrs. Green.—Clive's ſuperior excellence.—Love for Love; its great merit.—Sir Sampſon Legend.—Foreſight, a character of humour.—Ben a wit.—Pope.—Tattle.—Mrs. Frail.—Doris.—Angelica not amiable.

CONGREVE formed himſelf upon Wycherly; but his wit is more flowing, his fancy more exuberant, his knowledge more extenſive, and his judgment more profound; though he is by no means a ſtrict obſerver of the unities, the conduct of his fables is well ſtudied, and ſometimes exact; his cataſtrophes are generally perplexed and ſometimes improbable.

When Congreve began to write, the licentious manners, introduced by Charles II. were in full vigour;

vigour; the paſſion to eſtabliſh popery, in the reign of his ſucceſſor, had not diminiſhed the immorality of the people. The great view of James was the converting his ſubjects to his own ſuperſtition; to which, I believe, he was the more devoted, as he fancied their imbibing his religious creed would render them more ſubmiſſive to his government. Papiſts, like other diſſenters, when in a ſtate of perſecution, or deprived of benefits which they ought to enjoy, will endeavour to gain a mitigation of their hardſhips by contributing to ſupport every ſcheme of government with their utmoſt weight and intereſt; remove the clogs that ſeparate them from the reſt of the people, and papiſts will be as ſtaunch friends to liberty as any other ſubjects.

Wycherly, it is plain, was the original which our young poet admired and copied. Wycherly faithfully tranſcribed the manners of the times when the king and his courtiers, in conjunction with the poets, were the pimps to debauch the morals of the people. Dr. Johnſon ſtyles Wycherly a ſcribbler, from an honeſt indignation at the impurity of his writings; but ſurely the comedies of Dryden, Otway, and others, are not leſs exceptionable than his. He, like others, was borne down by the common current, which was rendered irreſiſtible by royal patronage and protection. To this, Dryden himſelf aſcribes the vicious writings of the poets:

> The poets, who muſt live by courts, or ſtarve,
> Were proud ſo good a government to ſerve;
> And, mixing with buffoons and pimps profane,
> Tainted the ſtage for ſome ſmall ſnip of gain;

For

For they, like harlots under bawds profeſs'd,
Took all th' ungodly pains and got the leaſt.
Thus did the thriving malady prevail;
The court its head, the poets but the tail.
Miſſes there were, but modeſtly conceal'd:
Whitehall the naked Venus firſt reveal'd;
Where, ſtanding as at Cyprus, in her ſhrine,
The ſtrumpet was ador'd with rites divine *, &c.

Few men were ſo admired, and beloved by his contemporaries, as Wycherly: he was eſteemed the moſt accompliſhed gentleman of the age he lived in, and, as ſuch, courted and careſſed by his royal maſter.

Congreve was endowed with all the ſtrong faculties of perception which enable the comic writer to deſcribe the various characters of mankind. He ſeems to have known the foibles, paſſions, humours, and vices, of the world by intuition. His Old Batchelor was acted when he was twenty-one; in his dedication, he tells Lord Clifford that it had lain by him almoſt four years. Dryden and Southern were aſtoniſhed when they peruſed this play, and pronounced it a prodigy of early genius. In the Old Batchelor, we perceive, that, from Ben Johnſon's Bobadil and Maſter Stephen, the author has formed his Captain Bluff and Sir Joſeph Wittol. His gentlemen are partly his own and partly taken from Wycherly. Bellmour and Sharper are allied to Horner and Freeman, in the Country Wife and Plain Dealer. Vainlove, who loves no pleaſure that is not to be obtained without difficulty, is a character of humour; and ſo, I think, is Heartwell, who reſembles

* Dryden's epilogue to the Pilgrim.

ſembles, in ſome of his features, Pinchwife in the Country Wife.

I cannot think, with Dr. Johnſon, that Heartwell is a fictitious character. Many ſuch may be ſeen, who, having, from ſpleen or poſitiveneſs of diſpoſition, denied themſelves, in early life, the pleaſures of the conjugal union, growl out the remainder of their days in ſatirical reflections on the happineſs they have rejected. The ſcene between the Old Batchelor and Sylvia, in the third act, is a maſterpiece.—The audience, in Congreve's time, were particularly fond of having a city-cuckold dreſſed out for their entertainment; and Fondlewife is ſerved up with very poignant ſauce, for the ſeveral incidents in the ſcene are extremely diverting. Lord Kaims finds fault with the dialogue, in the firſt act, between Bellmour, Sharper, and Heartwell, as if it was mere converſation, and that the buſineſs of the play ſtood ſtill; but what buſineſs is more neceſſary than the knowledge of character? the manners of the perſonæ dramatis are by ſuch dialogues unfolded to the audience. The ſame objection may be raiſed againſt ſome interviews of the Prince of Wales and Falſtaff, in Henry IV.

The Double Dealer was acted a year after the Old Batchelor. This comedy was uſhered into the world by a copy of verſes, to his dear friend, Mr. Congreve, by Dryden. In this addreſs, he freely acknowledges the ſuperior genius of the old dramatic writers, with a fine compliment to the author of the Double Dealer, who alone ſupplies all thoſe excellencies which were deficient in the writers of Charles II.'s reign. The pathetic concluſion, every man of taſte, though he has

has often read it, will be pleaſed to ſee inſerted here:

Maintain your poſt, that's all the fame you need,
For 'tis impoſſible you ſhould proceed.
Already I am worn with care and age,
And juſt abandoning th' ungrateful ſtage *.
Unprofitably kept at Heav'n's expence,
I live a rent-charge on his providence,—
But you, whom ev'ry muſe and grace adorn,
Whom I foreſee to better fortune born,
Be kind to my remains,—and, oh! defend,
Againſt your judgment, your departed friend!
Let not th' inſulting foe my fame purſue,
But ſhade thoſe laurels which deſcend to you;
And take for tribute what theſe lines expreſs;
You merit more, nor could my love do leſs!

In his dedication of the Double Dealer, to Montague, afterwards Earl of Halifax, the author, though he owns he failed in his attempt, ſays, he deſigned to have written a regular comedy. But he ſoon takes courage to aſſert, that he has not miſcarried in the whole; he had reſolved, he ſays, to preſerve the three unities. Then, in a luſcious ſtyle, he heaps abundance of nauſeous flattery on his patron; and indeed I think Congreve as awkward a dedicator as any in our language.—When he has finiſhed his panegyric, he tells us, that he hearkened after objections; but like his friend, Dryden, he can find none worth anſwering; yet he goes on anſwering ſeveral of them. At laſt he becomes humble, and begs the critic to re-conſider his remarks. But what ſhocks our author moſt, is the offence he has given to the ladies; for he would rather offend all the critics in

* His laſt play, of Love Triumphant, or Nature will prevail, was acted the ſame year with the Double Dealer.

in the world than one of the fair ſex. And yet I think his defence is a very poor one, and amounts to little leſs than owning his fault; for ſurely, out of the whole ſex, he might have choſen much better repreſentatives of it than the ladies in the Double Dealer.

The manners of this play are more licentious than thoſe of the Old Batchelor.—His cuckold, Fondlewife, in that comedy, pleaſed the town ſo greatly, that he determined to give the audience a leaſh of them in his Double Dealer; for he has preſented them with no leſs than three. A father, talking obſcenely to his daughter, is ſomething monſtrous, and almoſt incredible; and yet Sir Paul Pliant's inſtructions, to the only virtuous woman in the play, are of that kind.

Maſkwell's character, is partly taken from Syrus, in the Heautontimorumenos of Terence, who, by uttering truths, carries his point more covertly to deceive; and partly, I think, from the Timantus of Fletcher's Cupid's Revenge; as Lady Touchwood greatly reſembles Bacha in the ſame play. Briſk's pertneſs is not unlike the petulance of Novel in the Plain Dealer, and Lord Froth's ſolemnity is an improvement of Lord Plauſible's ſtarch civility in the ſame play.

The plot is extremely intricate, and exacts from the ſpectator very deep attention; without it, he will not be able to ſee how it is unravelled in the cataſtrophe.

Double

Double Dealer. Act I. Scene IV.

LORD FROTH.

There is nothing more unbecoming a man of quality than to laugh;—it is ſuch a vulgar expreſſion of the paſſions!—Every body can laugh.

Of the ſame ſentiment, with reſpect to laughter, was a late very accompliſhed nobleman, who, by his own example, juſtified the doctrine of Lord Froth. A genuine laugh is as difficult, I believe to be had, as a generous tear.—Nature, by our frame, intended both for the purpoſes of humanity. There is certainly much hypocriſy in pretending to aſſume either; but the feigned laugh is leſs cenſurable than the vile crocodile's tears. An aſſenting half-laugh, or ſmile, is as much expected from an acquaintance as a bow or a ſhake of the hand. From a Lord C. who wore a maſk all his life-time, and taught his only ſon to do the ſame, nothing ſincere, either in grief or mirth, was to be expected. The man, who ſtrives to repreſs the natural impulſe which ridicule excites, never knew the happineſs which the tear of pity for the unfortunate beſtows.

The Guardian has written an excellent paper, with much pleaſantry and humour, on the ſeveral ſorts of laughers, which he arranges under the following heads:—the dimplers, the ſmilers, the laughers, the grinners, and the horſe-laughers. Lord Froth and Lord C. are of the ſecond ſpecies. The dimple, ſays this writer, was, by the antients, termed the Chian laugh;—and this he gives to the prudes. For my part, though I am not fond of the grin, which is generally practiſed by ſnarlers, or thoſe who wiſh to ſhew their teeth, nor the Sardonic, which Steele ſays is the Greek and

and Roman horſe-laugh, yet I am no enemy to what he calls the riſus of the antients, which is the ſame as our hearty laugh. If the ſect of dimplers and ſmilers prevail, we ſhall have no mirth but what the houſe of commons or the theatre can give. There we are certain to have a full chorus of laughers.

Act III. Scene the Tenth.

Lady Froth. Briſk.

BRISK.

Beſides your ladyſhip's coachman having a red face——

When this play was acted at Drury-lane, about five and twenty years ſince, an accidental or wilful blunder of Woodward, who acted Briſk in a lively and diverting manner, cauſed ſuch repeated laughter in the theatre as I ſcarcely ever heard.—Mrs. Clive, who acted Lady Froth, had, by miſtake, or in a hurry, laid on more rouge than uſual; and Briſk, in his criticiſm on the lady's heroic poem, inſtead of ſaying, 'Your coachman having a red face,' ſaid, *Your ladyſhip having a red face.* This was no ſooner uttered, than peals of laughter were redoubled over the theatre. Woodward affected to look abaſhed and confounded; Clive bore the incident heroically. When they retired to the green-room, from the ſtage, they were followed by the players, who expected a ſcene of violent altercation; but this inimitable actreſs diſappointed them: 'Come, Mr. Woodward,' ſhe gravely ſaid, 'let us rehearſe the next ſcene, leſt more blunders ſhould fall out.' Clive was in Lady Froth, as in the reſt of her comic characters, ſuperior

rior to all actreſſes. Happy was that author who could write a part equal to her abilities! ſhe not only, in general, exceeded the writer's expectation, but all that the moſt enlightened ſpectator could conceive. By her encouragement and inſtructions, and her own induſtry, Miſs Pope is become a valuable actreſs; but genius cannot be communicated. Mrs. Green, of all the female players, in comic humour came the neareſt to this admirable comedian. It was Mrs. Green's misfortune to live at the ſame time with Clive. I ſhall as ſoon expect to ſee another Butler, Rabelais, or Swift, as a Clive.

By conſent of all the critics, Love for Love is eſteemed not only the moſt excellent of Congreve's plays, but one of the beſt in our language. His characters are drawn with ſuch ſtrength and comprehenſion, that his comedies are perpetual commentaries on the paſſions and humours of mankind. The puniſhment of an unnatural and hard-hearted parent is the moral aim of the poet; and in this he has, by a judicious conduct of his plot, fully ſucceeded.

Sir Samſon Legend is a finiſhed portrait of an ill-natured wit. Foreſight is, I think, a character of humour; there were, it is true, in his time, many perſons infected with judicial aſtrology; even the name of Dryden has ennobled the inſignificant ſect; but Foreſight is made up of dreams, nativities, and ſuperſtitions of every kind. A ridiculous dread of futurity goes through his whole life; and, as Bluff, in the old Batchelor, ſays 'fighting is meat, drink, and cloth, to him,' ſo is omen-hunting to Foreſight. But the number of the ſuperſtitious does not abate the humour of a character:—Cervantes wrote his Don Quixote, not with the view of curing one man infected with the ſpirit of knight-errantry,

errantry, but a large number of Quixotes. A ſingle character is a monſter not worth a writer's aim.

There is ſurely an abſurdity in making the ſon of a knight a common ſailor or foremaſt man; perhaps the author thought he could not raiſe ſo much mirth from the midſhipman as a dealer in forecaſtle converſation. The character is well calculated to excite much laughter, and to carry on the fable with comic ſpirit; but Ben is not a humouriſt; he is, what Angelica terms him, an abſolute ſea-wit; his being a ſailor is a matter of accident. The author, in his prologue, owns he took fire from the manly ſcenes of the Plain Dealer. Scandal is introduced, as a ſecond Manly, to ſatirize the vices of the age; he performs his office with the true ſpirit of a reformer; for he abſolutely forgets good manners, and, as to good-nature, that is not to be expected from a cenſor. Tattle is an original coxcomb, who, in the midſt of his prattlings, brags of ſecrecy. Mr. Pope has queſtioned whether Congreve's fools are really ſuch:

Tell me if Congreve's fools are fools indeed!

The mere fool is no object of common ſatire. Though Congreve has given ſomething like wit to his fops, on examination you will find that it is only the colour of it; it is the Briſtol ſtone, but not the diamond. Briſk, in the Double Dealer, is ſo lively a coxcomb, that you are ſurpriſed into an opinion of his being ſomething better than he is: Tattle is merely whipt ſyllabub and an empty phantom of livelineſs.

The ladies in this play are Congreve's ladies, moſt of them vicious and abandoned. Mrs. Frail, a woman of the town, as he calls her in his dramatis perſonæ, is a main inſtrument to carry on the plot.

plot, Mrs. Foreſight, *her ſiſter every way*,* who is ſo generous as to forget in the morning, the favours ſhe grants her lovers over-night, is the much-boaſted Doris of this writer. If the character were really original, I ſhould join the cry of its celebrators, for the thought is obvious; but, if the reader will turn to Otway's Friendſhip in Faſhion, he will find Mrs. Foreſight is only an improvement of Lady Squeamiſh.† The author's favourite is Angelica, who at laſt rewards Valentine with her perſon and fortune: but that miſtreſs is not an amiable character, who drives her lover to the brink of deſpair, and is ſatisfied with nothing leſs than his ſigning to his own ruin as a proof of his paſſion.

* Love for Love, Act II.

† Tom Brown makes Mrs. Barry, the celebrated actreſs, a perfect Doris. He ſays, that ſhe did not know the lover who gave her five guineas over-night, unleſs he brought the ſame ſum in the morning. But Tom had an inſuperable itch for ſcandal. Tom Brown's Works, vol. III. p. 36, 9th ed.

CHAP. XLV.

Religion and politics.—Miniſters ſore about politics.—A great lawyer.—The Revolution and Union.—Houſe of Brunſwic.—What miniſters and magiſtrates are knaves or fools.—Mount Veſuvius.—Lady Mary Wortley Montague.—Smith.—His return to the ſtage;—death and epitaph.—Verbruggen.—Bowen and Quin.—Ryan.—Walker.—Kynaſton.—Powell's ſarcaſm on his acting.—Kynaſton's ſon and grandſon.—Mrs. Bracegirdle.—Congreve's aſſiduities.—Mrs. Bracegirdle courted by the dramatic lovers of Rowe and Congreve.—Her excellent character.—Tom Brown.—Curl.—Dr. Arbuthnot.—Why Mrs. Bracegirdle left the ſtage.—Wanton Wife.—Mourning Bride.—Critics.—Dryden.—Characters of the Mourning Bride—Scene in the ſecond act.—Almeria's ſpeech;—compared with the ſoliloquy of Juliet.—Taſwell, a ſpeaker of tragedy.—Congreve and the Greek dramatiſts.—Oſmyn's ſoliloquy.—Congreve's tragic obſcenity.—Way of the World:—Plot, characters, actors, &c.

Love for Love. Act IV. Scene X.

VALENTINE, [ASSUMING MADNESS.]

What are you for, religion or politics? There is a couple of topics for you, no more like one another than oil and vinegar; and yet theſe two, beaten together, make ſauce for the whole nation.

SIR Harry Savil, when a French nobleman boaſted of the great freedom of converſation they enjoyed

enjoyed in France, obſerved to him, that his countrymen were deprived of the two only topics which deſerved the people's diſcuſſion, religion and politics.

Our miniſters of late, I do not mean the preſent*, have been extremely tender on the ſubject of politics; as for religion, they let that ſhift for itſelf. Not many years ſince, a great lawyer gave it as his opinion, on a public occaſion, 'That no honeſt man talked politics.' This, in a free country, is ſurely very ſtrange doctrine! Without politics, we ſhould have been deprived of that great bleſſing, the Revolution; without politics, the kingdoms of Great-Britain would not have been united; nay, more, without the ſame medium, the illuſtrious houſe of Brunſwick would not have aſcended the throne of England. The great lawyer knew this; and yet durſt, in the face of day, broach ſuch a ſlaviſh doctrine. That miniſter, or magiſtrate, who would debar Engliſhmen the liberty of ſpeech, can neither be wiſe nor honeſt. The people, who have a free licence to debate on all topics, are leſs dangerous to their governors than thoſe who are deprived of that bleſſing. Mount Veſuvius is never ſo alarming when its eruptions are free as when the internal contents are ſtruggling in the crater, and reſtrained from their regular vent and diſcharge.—The great lawyer's doctrine is fitter for the meridian of Conſtantinople than London: if, in that metropolis, the coffee-houſe politicians preſume to arraign the conduct of the miniſter, they are, ſays Lady Mary Wortley Montague, immediately diſpatched, and the houſe burnt to the ground.

The

* November, 1783.

The man, whoſe abilities every body admires, but whoſe politics are univerſally condemned, ſhould have recollected, that to politics he owed his ſeat in parliament, and might poſſibly have been obliged to an Engliſh cobler for his vote.

In theſe three comedies, the parts were acted by ſome of the beſt comedians that ever belonged to a theatre. Colley Cibber has drawn moſt of their characters in a ſtyle ſo expreſſive of their ſeveral abilities, that the memory of them will be tranſmitted to future times; of ſome he has made but ſlight mention. The cauſe of Smith's leaving the ſtage he has related; but of his return to it, and death, he has taken no notice.—When Betterton ſeceded from Chriſtopher Rich, and opened, by ſubſcription, a theatre in the Tennis-court, Lincoln's-inn-fields, Smith, who had not acted for ſeveral years, was perſuaded, by his friends of diſtinguiſhed rank, to return to the ſtage. It is ſaid, that the intreaties of his old acquaintance and fellow-labourers, Betterton and Mrs. Barry, had greater weight with him than the influence of his noble friends. Scandal was his firſt part; continued ſhouts of applauſe witneſſed the ſatisfaction which the audience felt on ſeeing their old friend return to them. But their pleaſure was not of long continuance; for ſoon after, on the fourth day of Cyrus the Great, a new tragedy by Banks, Downs informs us, that Mr. Smith was taken ill and died. Chetwood relates, that, being ſeized with the cramp in the night, he jumped out of his bed, and was ſo long walking about his chamber in the dark, that he caught a cold which ended in a diſtemper that brought him to his grave.

Booth,

Booth, in his elegant Latin epitaph on Smith, ſpeaks of his profeſſional abilities, his juſt adminiſtration of the ſtage, his affability and condeſcenſion, as if he had been perfectly acquainted with him. But, when Smith died, Booth was a Weſtminſter ſcholar, and in his fourteenth year; the character of this eminent comedian muſt have been drawn up from ſuch information as the writer, in his riper years, obtained.

Verbruggen, who was employed in no leſs than four of Congreve's plays, was an actor of more merit than Cibber was willing to allow; for, in his Apology, he ſlightly mentions him as a perſon much inferior to the actors whoſe praiſes he had recorded. I ſhall hereafter have occaſion to ſpeak of him more fully. Bowen, who played Setter in the Old Batchelor, Jeremy in Love for Love, and Witwou'd in the Way of the World, a comedian of ſome merit, remarkable for the loudneſs of his voice, was unhappy in a choleric diſpoſition. This man fell in company with Quin, at a public-houſe, much frequented at that time by players, near Clare-market. He reproached Quin for leaving Drury-lane playhouſe; and for his acting the part of Tamerlane, at the theatre in Lincoln's-inn fields, once only.—Quin, in return, told him, that Mr. Jonſon, who had acted Jacomo, in the Libertine Deſtroyed, a ſingle night, had greatly ſurpaſſed him, who had often played the part. After ſome farther altercation, Bowen retired to a neighbouring tavern, and ſent for Mr. Quin. Upon his entering the room, Bowen ſhut the door, and drew his ſword, bidding him draw his. Quin remonſtrated againſt this ſudden violence, but in vain; and, in defending his own life, mortally wounded Bowen; who, when

when his rage was cooled by the loſs of blood, owned that he had been the aggreſſor. I have not the trial before me, and therefore cannot be abſolutely ſure that I have minutely deſcribed this unhappy buſineſs; but the main part is, I am confident, according to matter of fact. Quin was tried at the Old Bailey, and honourably acquitted.

This accident fell out in 1718. It is remarkable that Ryan, about a month after, underwent a like trial at the ſame place, for killing a man, in his own defence, at a public houſe; and was alſo acquitted with honour. Walker, the original Macheath, was brought to the ſame bar, I believe at a period not very diſtant, for the murder of a bailiff; he was acquitted by the jury, but whether with the ſame honourable circumſtances I know not.

Kynaſton, who is characteriſed by Cibber, as a very original performer, was taken ill during the firſt repreſentation of the Double Dealer. When he retired from the ſtage is not known; I find him among the dramatis perſonæ of Dryden's Love Triumphant, acted ſoon after Congreve's Double Dealer, and in Banks's tragedy of Cyrus the Great.

Notwithſtanding the high encomium, beſtowed on this actor in Cibber's Apology, I have been informed, by ſome of the old comedians, that, from his early repreſentation of women's characters, Kynaſton had contracted ſome diſagreeable tones in ſpeaking, or what we term canting.—When George Powell was once diſcharging the intemperance of the preceding day from his ſtomach, during the time of action Kynaſton aſked him if he was ſick.—'How is it poſſible to be otherwiſe,' ſaid Powell, 'when I hear you ſpeak?'

Kynaſton

Kynaſton died wealthy; he bred his only ſon a mercer, who lived in Covent-garden; father and ſon were buried in that pariſh. The Reverend Mr. Kynaſton, the grandſon, I have ſeen; but this gentleman thought it no honour to be the deſcendant of a player, and would not communicate any anecdotes of his anceſtor. He purchaſed the impropriation of Aldgate.

Mrs. Bracegirdle was the favourite actreſs of Congreve and Rowe. In the ſeveral lovers they gave her, in their plays, they expreſſed their own paſſion for her. In Tamerlane, Rowe courted her Selima, in the perſon of Axalla; in the Fair Penitent, he was the Horatio to her Lavinia; and, in Ulyſſes, the Telemachus to Bracegirdle's Semanthe. Congreve inſinuated his addreſſes in his Valentine to her Angelica, in Love for Love; in his Oſmyn to her Almeria, in the Mourning Bride; and, laſtly, in his Mirabel to her Millamant, in the Way of the World. Mirabel, the fine gentleman of the play, is, I believe, not very diſtant from the real character of Congreve.

Mrs. Bracegirdle, ſays Cibber, had a lively aſpect, with ſuch a glow of health and cheerfulneſs in her countenance, that ſhe inſpired every body, that was not paſt it, with deſire. Scarce an audience ſaw her that were not half of them her lovers, without a ſuſpected favourite amongſt them; and this power over the public he attributes to her being guarded in her private character. But the aſſiduous courtſhip, which Congreve paid this actreſs, did not paſs unnoticed. He was conſtantly in her lodgings, and often rode out with her.—He dined with her every day, ſays Tom Brown; and viſited her in public

and private *. Though this author indulges the ſpirit of ſcandal to exceſs, yet the tendreſſe of Congreve for Bracegirdle was a common ſubject of converſation. In a book, called the Compariſon between the two Stages, publiſhed in 1702, her character is treated with illiberal freedom.—— The author, to ſome tolerable obſervations on plays and players, has joined a moſt outrageous ſpirit of invective. It will be a ſufficient vindication of Mrs. Bracegirdle, that ſhe viſited perſons of the moſt unblemiſhed character as well as moſt exalted rank in the female world. The charms of her converſation were not inferior, we may reaſonably ſuppoſe, to thoſe of her perſon; for ſhe was viſited, as Clive is now, by perſons of rank and taſte, to a very advanced old age. That Congreve was often at her houſe, to the laſt year of his life, muſt be attributed to a friendſhip contracted for an actreſs who had given life and ſpirit to ſome of his favourite characters; and likewiſe to that, and that only, we muſt place his bequeathing her the ſum of 200l. When Curl, whom Dr. Arbuthnot termed one of the new terrors of death, from his conſtantly printing every eminent perſon's life and laſt will, publiſhed an advertiſement of Memoirs of the Life of Congreve, ſhe intereſted herſelf ſo far in his reputation as to demand a ſight of the book in MS. This was refuſed. She then aſked by what authority his life was written, and what pieces contained in it were genuine? Upon being told, there would be ſeveral of his eſſays, letters, &c. ſhe anſwered, 'Not one ſingle ſheet of paper, I dare ſay.' And in this ſhe was a true prophet; for, in that

* Tom Brown, Vol. III.

that book, there is not a line of Congreve which had not been printed before. Arbuthnot endeavoured, from friendſhip to the deceaſed, to prevent any impoſition on the public in the name of Congreve, and met with impertinent abuſe from the perſon who called himſelf the author of Memoirs of the Life, Writings, and Amours, of William Congreve, Eſq.

The cauſe of Mrs. Bracegirdle's leaving the ſtage, in the prime of life, Cibber knew; but, for obvious reaſons, he did not, in his Apology, relate it. When his book was publiſhed, ſhe was then living, and would not have been pleaſed to have it told, that the preference given to Mrs. Oldfield, obliged her to retire from the theatre.—I have formerly ſeen a pamphlet, in which the hiſtory of this diſpute, between theſe theatrical ladies, was minutely related. Oldfield riſing greatly in the opinion of the public, as an actreſs of merit, both in tragedy and comedy, her friends claimed a right to appoint a day for her benefit before Mrs. Bracegirdle's. The friends of the latter maintained that ſhe had a prior right, not only from long preſcription, but ſuperior merit. It was at laſt ſettled, by the contending parties, that the rival queens ſhould fix on a favourite character, to be acted by them alternately: the part choſen was Mrs. Brittle, in the Wanton Wife. The preference of the public appeared ſo ſtrongly in favour of Oldfield, that Bracegirdle never afterwards entered the playhouſe as an actreſs. The time of her receſſion is not juſtly marked by Cibber, who fixes it to the year 1710. Mrs. Bracegirdle and Mrs. Barry had retired ſome years, when they both returned to the ſtage, to act for the benefit of their old friend, Mr. Betterton,

terton, in Congreve's Love for Love, April 7, 1709. The Royal Convert, of Rowe, was acted ſoon after the Union, (1707,) as we may learn from Ethelinda's prophecy in the concluſion of the play. The part of Ethelinda was acted by Oldfield; from which circumſtance alone we may conclude, that Mrs. Bracegirdle was not then on the ſtage, as Rowe, otherwiſe, would certainly have given it to her. Some few years before her death, Mrs. Bracegirdle retired to the houſe of W. Chute, Eſq; and died in 1748, in the eighty-fifth year of her age. She bequeathed her effects to her niece, who lived with her, and for whom ſhe expreſſed a great regard.

The Mourning Bride of Congreve was originally acted in 1697. To ſee a tragedy, written by the beſt comic author of the age, drew together vaſt ſhoals of writers and critics by profeſſion. It is traditionally ſaid, that Dryden was preſent the firſt night of repreſentation; that he was ſtruck and ſurpriſed with the firſt act; but that, before the end of the ſecond, he declared he was ſatisfied. It was, according to Downs, acted thirteen nights ſucceſſively. It is ſtill a very favourite play, eſpecially with the ladies. The fable is not ill choſen, nor can I think the principal characters are weakly drawn. In the part of the King, the author has indeed mixed pompous phraſeology with an outrageous vehemence of temper; yet ſtill he is a character. Almeria is a fine picture of conjugal affection and perſiſting fidelity. Zara's noble and exalted mind, hurried away by ungovernable paſſions, renders her an excellent perſonage to excite pity and terror.—Oſmyn is brave and generous, undiſmayed by adverſity, and reſigned to Providence.

The

The plot is intricate, and muſt be obſerved with the moſt ſcrupulous attention, or it will eſcape the ſpectator. That the contrivers of deſtruction ought to fall by their own arts, is the apparent moral of the Mourning Bride.

Dr. Johnſon commends the following part of a ſcene, in the ſecond act of this tragedy, as the moſt poetical paragraph in the whole maſs of Engliſh poetry:

ALMERIA.

It was a fancy'd noiſe, for all is huſh'd,

LEONORA.

It bore the accents of a human voice.

ALMERIA.

It was thy fear,—or elſe ſome tranſient wind,
Whiſtling through hollows of the vaulted iſle.
We'll liſten.——

LEONORA.

—— Hark! ——

ALMERIA.

No, all is huſh'd and ſtill as death.—'Tis dreadful!
How rev'rend is the face of this tall pile,
Whoſe antient pillars rear their marble heads
To bear aloft its arch'd and pond'rous roof,
By its own weight made ſteadfaſt and immoveable,
Looking tranquility!—It ſtrikes an awe
And terror to my aching ſight!—The tombs
And monumental caves of death look cold,
And ſhoot a chilneſs to my trembling heart!
Give me thy hand—and let me hear thy voice!
Nay, quickly ſpeak to me, and let me hear
Thy voice:—my own affrights me with its echoes!

The

The paſſage certainly deſerves much praiſe; but I would beg leave to remark, that Almeria's taking notice of the architecture of the building,——

> By its own weight made ſteadfaſt and immoveable,
> Looking tranquillity,——

is a calm ſentiment, and not of a piece with the reſt. The fears of Almeria are raiſed by objects in her ſight, which aſſiſt the fancy: but the ſucceſſive images of terror, which Shakſpeare gives his Juliet when ſhe is about to drink the ſleeping-potion given her by the frier, proceeding from a tender mind alarmed and apprehenſive, are, in my opinion, equal, if not ſuperior, to this boaſted paſſage of Congreve:

JULIET,

[WHEN ALONE, AND AFTER RECEIVING FROM THE FRIER THE SLEEPING DRAUGHT.]

——————— Come, phial! —

What if it be a poiſon, which the frier
Subtly hath miniſter'd to have me dead,
Leſt in this marriage he ſhould be diſhonour'd,
Becauſe he marry'd me before to Romeo?—
I fear it is!—And yet methinks it ſhould not,
For he hath ſtill been try'd a holy man.
How, if, when I am laid upon the tomb,
I wake before the time that Romeo
Comes to redeem me?—there's a fearful point!
Shall I not then be ſtifled in the vault,
To whoſe foul mouth no healthſome air breathes in,
And there be ſtrangled ere my Romeo comes?
Or, if I live, is it not very like,
The horrible conceit of death and night,
Together with the terror of the place,
Where, for theſe many hundred years, the bones
Of all my bury'd anceſtors are pack'd, —
Where bloody Tybalt, yet but green in earth,

Lies

Lies feſt'ring in his ſhroud; where, as they ſay,
At ſome hours in the night, ſpirits reſort;—

Or, if I wake ſhall I not be diſtraught
(Invironed with all theſe hideous fears)
And madly play with my forefather's joints;
And pluck the mangled Tybalt from his ſhroud;
And, in this rage, with ſome great kinſman's bones,
As with a club, daſh out my deſp'rate brains!———
O look! methinks I ſee my couſin's ghoſt
Seeking out Romeo———Stay, Tybalt, ſtay!—
Romeo, I come!———

The interview between Oſmyn and Almeria, in the tombs, has generally an aukward effect, from their both falling at the ſame time; and while poor Leonora is endeavouring to ſupport them, a new perſonage, Heli, arrives; and, his ſurpriſe not being generally well repreſented, a contemptuous laugh ſucceeds. I remember that Taſwell, a comic actor of a particular caſt, fancied he could ſpeak tragedy as well as any man, and begged Mr. Fleetwood, the manager, to truſt him with the part of Heli; but the player and the patentee both repented the frolic, for Taſwell was born only to excite mirth; and ſurely a merrier audience, at his liſping out the lines of Heli, was never ſeen.

As this meeting of the huſband and wife is lengthened out to tedioufneſs, great part of it is curtailed by the prompter. Our author, who certainly felt the paſſion of love with energy, though he was not always very happy in expreſſing it, has thrown into this dialogue ſome very tender and affecting thoughts. Few of our play-writers were acquainted with the Greek dramatiſts: Congreve was a polite ſcholar; he was well read in them.—Several paſſages, in the admirable ſcene between Oreſtes and Electra, in the tragedy of that name, where he diſco-

diſcovers himſelf to his ſiſter, may be traced in the interview of Oſmyn and Almeria. I mean that part of Electra, where the Greek player, Porus, in acting that character, bore in his arms an urn which contained the aſhes of his own ſon, and melted, by the exceſs of pathetic grief, all Athens into tears.

The priſon-ſcene, in the third act, is made of conſequence by the incident of Oſmyn's finding a paper, written by his pious father, with a prayer for his ſon; and the reflections, on the word 'heaven' being torn from the petition, reſulting from ſituation, are very natural. Oſmyn's being rouſed to a ſenſe of his people's wrongs by his friend, Heli, is the effect of generous paſſion and nobly affecting. Garrick, through the whole part of Oſmyn, was a ſkilful actor, but his inexhauſtible fire had here room to operate to advantage.

In the priſon dialogue, between Oſmyn and Almeria, many expreſſions of the huſband to the wife are extremely groſs, and very diſgraceful to the writer. The talking obſcenely, in tragedy, is peculiar to the Engliſh dramatiſts; I do not remember to have read, in any of the French tragedies, a ſingle line that intrenches upon good-manners. Dryden, Otway, and Lee, were continually offending againſt decency; and Congreve, whoſe fancy was warm and wanton, has imitated his licentious predeceſſors, nay, in one or two paſſages of this laſt ſcene, almoſt ſurpaſſed them:

Then Garcia ſhall lie panting on thy boſom, &c.

Zara's ſurpriſing Almeria and Oſmyn in conference produces an incident, which, from ſituation and circumſtance is rather of the comic than the tragic

tragic ſtrain. One princeſs jealous of another's ſuperior charms may indeed be made a ſerious ſubject, as in the Diſtreſſed Mother; but the expreſſions of anger and reſentment, in the captive queen, ſeldom fail to excite laughter. Mrs. Porter, who was deſervedly admired in Zara, and Mrs. Pritchard, her ſucceſſor in that part, could not, with all their ſkill, prevent the riſibility of the audience in this interview. Mrs. Siddons alone preſerves the dignity and truth of character, unmixed with any incitement to mirth from countenance, expreſſion, or action.

If the compoſition of this tragedy, with reſpect to ſentiment, paſſion, and diction, were equal to the well-ſtudied œconomy of the fable, it might challenge a rank with our moſt frequented tragedies. But, notwithſtanding we have, in ſome places, a falſe blaze of words and an exuberant ſwell of paſſion, blended with images far-fetched and unpleaſing, there are ſcenes in the Mourning Bride, which never fail to attract the attention and engage the heart of the ſpectator; the happy concluſion will for ever cauſe joy and exultation in the audience, who will continually diſmiſs the players with the loudeſt approbation.

The firſt characters of this play are generally diſliked by the principal actors; their taſte is too refined, it ſeems, to reliſh the language of it; and we ſeldom ſee Oſmyn, Almeria, Zara, and the King, ſupported according to the ſtrength of a company. But there is no diſcretion in being wiſer than our cuſtomers, who are, at the ſame time, our judges. Booth, Oldfield, Porter, and Mills the elder, were long the favourites of the public in Congreve's pantomime, as Churchill terms it. Mr. Garrick did not, on account of tur-

gi-

gid expreſſion, reject the noble paſſion of Oſmyn. At the ſame time, Miſs Bellamy was a pleaſing Almeria; Mrs. Pritchard and Berry ſupported Zara and the King.

When Oldfield, a few years before her death, reſigned the Mourning Bride, Mrs. Thurmond, by the inſtructions of Booth in that part, became a favourite actreſs in tragedy. She was a riſing performer at Lincoln's-inn fields, when, about the year 1724, Booth, Wilks, and Cibber, pleaſed with her manner of acting, engaged her at an advanced income. In 1733, ſhe retired, in diſcontent, to Goodman's Fields, where honeſt Giffard gave her a kind reception.—Her firſt part at his theatre, was the Mourning Bride, which ſhe acted with applauſe ſeveral nights. In a year or two ſhe returned to Drury-lane; and retired altogether from the theatre about forty years ſince.

For her own benefit, the comic Clive put on the royal robes of Zara; ſhe found them too heavy, and very wiſely never wore them afterwards.

The Way of the World was Mr. Congreve's next play. The moral intention of the author, in Love for Love, was the reward of conſtancy in the lover, and the puniſhment of cruelty in the parent: in his laſt comedy, he propoſes to guard mankind againſt matrimonial falſehood.—The plot is ſingularly intricate.

Mirabel, the fine gentleman of the play, is a ſucceſsful lover of the Widow Languiſh, daughter of Lady Wiſhfor't, to whom he pays mock-addreſſes to cover his honourable courtſhip of Millamant her niece, a lady of large fortune. To prevent the diſcovery of the expected conſequences of his intrigue with the Widow Languiſh, he prevails on her to marry his acquaintance, Mr. Fainall;

Fainall; but, to guard the lady againſt the apprehended tyranny of her huſband, Mirabel perſuades her to make over to him her whole eſtate real in truſt.—Mrs. Marwood, the friend and miſtreſs of Fainall, ſecretly in love with Mirabel, diſcovers to the old lady his pretended courtſhip, which begets her irreconcileable hatred. To prevent Lady Wiſhfor't's entering into an improper match from reſentment, Mirabel marries his ſervant, Waitwell, to Foible, her waiting-woman; and, by her aſſiſtance, hopes to impoſe him on the old lady for his uncle. By Marwood's overhearing the diſcourſe, which paſſed between Wiſhfor't and Foible, and the latter's with Mrs. Fainall, the ſcheme of the ſham marriage is diſcovered; the lady is in a rage with her attendant; and Waitwell, her huſband, is arreſted, and releaſed on bail. Fainall, on his diſcovery that he was made a cuckold by anticipation, is enraged, and tries to oblige lady Wiſhfor't to make over her eſtate to him, with ſeveral other hard conditions, from which ſhe is unexpectedly delivered by the agency of Mirabel, who, by proving the infidelity of Fainall and Marwood, and producing the deed of gift in truſt, is rewarded with Millimant, which puts an end to the play.

Though this comedy does not preſent us with ſo glowing and ſo pleaſing a picture of life and manners as Love for Love, yet the reader will be ſurpriſed at the great power and ſkill of the writer. To delineate the manners of a mere coxcomb is not ſo difficult; but to give the picture of a man who incurs ridicule from affectation of wit, one who ſays ſo many things like wit that the common obſerver miſtakes them for it, is not a cheap buſineſs: Witwou'd coſt the writer more pains than ten Tattles. Whether Petulant be a character of humour

I am

I am at ſome loſs to determine. B. Jonſon defines humour to be a quality of the mind which draws the paſſions and affections all one way. Congreve ſays, I believe truly, that humour is as hard to be defined as wit; and therefore declares he dares venture no farther than to tell us what it is not. Amongſt his negatives he places habit and affectation. But how are they to be diſcriminated from true humour? —— There is, in my opinion, in that which is called humour, ſomething of both theſe qualities. Moroſe, in Ben Jonſon's Silent Woman, is quoted, by all critics on the ſubject, as a true character of humour: but how did he acquire that hatred to all ſpeech and noiſe but his own, if not from an affectation of ſingularity? nor can I ſee how he could poſſibly arrive at that degree of moroſeneſs but by long cuſtom and habit. Dryden defines humour to be a ridiculous extravagance in converſation wherein one man differs from another.—After having quoted Moroſe as a perfect character of humour, and more than inſinuated that humour in itſelf is ſomething uncommon, he ſoon after tells us, that there are no leſs than nine or ten parts of humour in the ſame comedy of the Silent Woman. If we ſubſcribe to Locke's opinion, that we have no innate principles, we muſt likewiſe allow, that we have no innate humours. Much more depends on the conſtruction of the body than we are, at all times, aware of. The organs of men, by which they receive outward impreſſions, are differently formed: from this alone the great variety of perceptions proceeds; and theſe, by degrees, produce diſtinction of humour and character. To make the reader amends for my preſumption, in giving my opinion on this difficult ſubject, I will ſubjoin Mr. Congreve's

greve's opinion of humour, in his letter to Dennis, which he modeſtly ſays ſerves him for one: 'A ſingular and unavoidable manner of doing or ſaying any thing peculiar and natural to one man only, by which his ſpeech and actions are diſtinguiſhed from thoſe of other men.' And this is certainly agreeable to Ben Jonſon' definition of humour, though not expreſſed in the ſame words; and not very different from Dryden's.—Corbin Morris, in his Eſſay on Wit and Humour, though he aſſumes a ſuperiority over Congreve, does not, in my opinion, vary from him or B. Jonſon: 'A humouriſt is a perſon, in real life, obſtinately attached to ſenſible peculiar oddities, of his own genuine growth, which appear in his temper and conduct.' Morris's man of humour is really the man of wit and pleaſantry who can play with the foibles of another; and Foote ſays, in his Eſſay on the Engliſh Comedy, that the humouriſt is the food of the man of humour.

Sir Wilful Witwou'd is diſcriminated from any other fox-hunter by no peculiarity except his wilfulneſs: whether this will entitle him to a character of humour I leave to the critics.

Millamant is a moſt agreeable coquet, with a great ſhare of ſenſe and good-nature. She is, indeed, the moſt unexceptionable character in the play. The reſt of the women are what I call Congreve's ladies. Strange! that a man, who converſed ſo much in the polite world, could ſcarcely find a female, amongſt his acquaintance, of genuine worth and unblemiſhed honour, fit to engraft in his comedies! In Lady Wiſhfor't's ſtyle, Mrs. Marwood and Mrs. Fainall, had been *ſophiſticated*; a misfortune which the old lady would willingly incur in an honourable way. Foible is a go-between, or bawd, and

and Mincing is ready to ſwear to any thing, for *her ladyſhip's ſervice.*

Congreve was ſo well aſſured of the ſucceſs of the Way of the World, that, in his prologue, he ſeems to defy the critics; for he calls upon them to damn his play, if they do not approve it. With an affected modeſty, he is entirely reſigned to their pleaſure:

> He owns with toil he wrought the following ſcenes;
> But if they're naught, ne'er ſpare him for his pains.
> Damn him the more; have no commiſeration
> For dulneſs on mature deliberation.
> He ſwears he'll not reſent one hiſs'd-off ſcene;
> Nor like thoſe peeviſh wits his play maintain,
> Who, to aſſert their ſenſe, your taſte arraign,
>
> In ſhort,—one play ſhall, with your leave to ſhew it,
> Give you one inſtance of a paſſive poet,
> Who to your judgment yields all reſignation,
> To ſave or damn after your own diſcretion.

Yet, after all this ſelf-denial, we are told, in poſitive terms, by Dennis, that this play 'was hiſſed by barbarous fools in the acting; and this treatment juſtly raiſed ſo much indignation in the writer, that he quitted the ſtage in diſdain.' How is it poſſible to reconcile this account with Congreve's own words, in his dedication of the play to the Earl of Montague?—'That it ſucceeded on the ſtage was almoſt beyond my expectation. Several years after this he accepted a ſhare in one of the theatres: upon what account, except his writing of plays, the ſhare could be offered him, I am not competent to gueſs. That this play was, very ſoon after its firſt exhibition, in favour with the public, is certain. I long ſince heard, indeed, that a particular ſcene, in the fifth act, between

tween Lady Wiſhfor't and Foible, was at firſt maltreated by the audience; and perhaps for that very reaſon which the author would moſt value himſelf upon, a cloſe imitation of his great idol, Ben Jonſon. Let any body compare this dialogue, between the lady and her waiting-woman, with the firſt ſcene of the Alchemiſt, between the two ſharpers, Face and Subtle, and he will find the reproaches of the former to the latter, on the miſerable ſtate in which he found him in St. Paul's, are ſtrongly imitated; they are the cloſeſt reſemblances that can be found in any dramatic writings. This, borrowing from old Ben, the critics, it ſeems, of thoſe days, did not approve; they thought Congreve rich enough in his own treaſures, without being obliged to have recourſe to others.

It muſt not be to the condemnation of the whole, or any part, of the Way of the World, that we muſt attribute this writer's quitting the drama. A man, who, about ninety years ſince, when money was at leaſt twice the value it is now, enjoyed places to the amount of 800l. per annum, could have little temptation to continue his authorſhip. Beſides, the warm ſun of the Marlborough family, by the elder branch of which he was particularly diſtinguiſhed, in all probability relaxed his poetical nerves. His patrons in vain complained of his indolence, after they had given him the means to be idle.

The great ſkill of the poet, in conducting his plot, is no where more conſpicuous than in the ſecond act of the play. Two artful people, who, from ſatiety, are heartily tired of each other, and only from convenience and mutual intereſt keep up a correſpondence, accidentally quarrel; and, from a colliſion

a colliſion of their paſſions, they not only unfold their own actions and characters, but open the preceding tranſactions neceſſary to be known by the audience. The ſcene between Marwood and Fainall I have always conſidered as a maſterpiece of writing, which cannot be read or admired too much. It is indeed a happy imitation of Ben Jonſon's manner of drawing the incidents of the fable, and explanation of characters by ſudden altercation.

Act III.

MRS. MARWOOD, ALONE,

[After hearing the converſation of Lady Wiſhfor't and Foible, and Mrs. Fainall and Foible.]

O man, man! woman, woman!—the devil is an aſs! If I were a painter, I would draw him like an idiot, a driveler, with a bib and bells.

This is a good commentary upon a paſſage, in Shakeſpeare's Timon, which puzzled his greateſt commentators:

SERVANT TO TIMON, ALONE,

[After being denied money by Semproniut.]

The devil knew not what he did when he made man politic. He croſſed himſelf by it; and *I cannot but think, in the end, the villainies of man will ſet him free.*

In the fourth act of the Way of the World, the matrimonial articles, ſettled between Mirabel and Millamant, are ſo judiciouſly framed, that they will ſerve, with a little faſhionable alteration, for a laſting model to all happy marriage contractors.

ACT

Act IV. Scene V.

MIRABEL

No decoy-duck to wheedle you a fop-ſcrambling to the play in a maſk.

When the mode, of females going maſked to a play, originated, is not, I believe, very eaſy to determine. We may be almoſt certain that it was not a practice before the civil wars, nor in faſhion till ſome time after the Reſtoration. I find theſe maſked ladies mentioned often in the prologues and epilogues to Dryden's, Lee's, and Otway's plays. The cuſtom was doubtleſs imported from France; and I believe we may, with ſome probability, fix its introduction to the year 1666 or 1667. The many diſturbances, which theſe diſguiſed females continually cauſed in the pit and boxes, prevented women of character from going to the playhouſe; and, ſuch was the continual ſcandal ariſing from it, that the ſober and grave part of the town were often, by theſe tumults, deprived of theatrical entertainments.—Conſtant uproars and riots called loudly for public redreſs: at length, after this nuiſance had been endured for near forty years, an accidental diſpute, concerning one Mrs. Fawkes, which ended in a duel, produced an act of parliament, in the 5th of Queen Anne, which prohibited the wearing of maſks in the theatre.

Act V.

Lady Wiſhfor't; Mrs. Marwood.

MRS. MARWOOD.

——— And from thence he tranſferred to the hands, nay, to the throats and lungs, of hawkers with voices more licentious than the loud flounder-man's.

From King William's days to almoſt the end of George I. there was a fellow, who diſtinguiſhed himſelf, above all others, in crying flounders in the ſtreets of London.—His voice was loud, but not unmuſical: the tones, in lengthening out the word flounders, were ſo happily varied, that people heard him with ſurpriſe and ſome degree of pleaſure. Walker, about the year 1725, revived, in the ſummer ſeaſon, a play called Maſſianello, or a Fiſherman a Prince, taken, I believe, from Durfey's Hiſtory of Maſſianello: he entered the ſtage crying flounders, in imitation of the loud flounder-man, ſo very like the original, that the applauſes, on this trifling occaſion, were very loud and redoubled.

Of thoſe comedians, who, within theſe fifty or ſixty years, have diſtinguiſhed themſelves in Congreve's comedies, moſt of whom I have often ſeen act, ſomething ſhould be ſaid. The Old Batchelor of Drury-lane was Harper, a good low comedian, but whoſe underſtanding was not of that ſize to give force to the ſarcaſtic poignancy of expreſſion, the whimſical ſtruggles of amorous paſſion, or the violent rage on diſcovered folly, in Heartwell; all which Quin perfectly conceived, and juſtly repreſented many years at Lincoln's-inn

inn fields and Covent-garden.—The Belmour of Wilks was the finiſhed and polite libertine; that of Walker was the bold and manly rake. The Captain Bluffe of B. Jonſon was as complete a piece of acting as I ever ſaw: his perſon was againſt him; for he was old and thin when I firſt ſaw him, which is now above fifty two years ſince, and I remember I thought him ill choſen for a bully; but his exquiſite performance ſoon cured me, and the whole audience, of any diffidence of his abilities. Colley Cibber's Fondlewife was much, and juſtly, admired and applauded, though ſome greatly preferred Dogget's portrait of old doting impotence to his. From a recollection of Cibber's manner, Foote acted a ſcene or two of Fondlewife better than any characters, except ſuch as he wrote purpoſely for himſelf. Hippiſley played Fondlewife in a manner original, and not much inferior to Cibber. Mrs. Horton, who was famous for coquets, was the Belinda of Drury-lane; and Mrs. Younger, the ſiſter of Mrs. Bicknel, celebrated, in the Tatler and Spectator for variety of humorous parts, was an actreſs much followed in this and many other comic characters, eſpecially the Country Wife. But Mrs. Younger was a general actreſs, and ſometimes appeared in tragedy, though, I think, not to advantage. Much about the time when ſhe left the ſtage, ſhe was married to the honourable Mr. Finch, who had, above twenty years before, been ſtabbed, in a quarrel, by the famous Sally Saliſbury.

In Love for Love, I ſaw Wilks, in his old age, play the part of Valentine with all the ſpirit and fire of youth. Two years after Colley Cibber, who had been long the finiſhed Tattle of

Drury-lane, acted Ben when he was paſt ſixty: it was ſaid that he copied Dogget, the original; but neither his voice nor look were ſuitable to the rough animation of a ſailor.—His acting Ben was a piece of managers craft. Joe Miller, who was a lively comic actor, and a favourite of the town in Ben, and many other diverting characters, had, by ſome mean œconomy of the managers, been driven from Drury-lane to Goodman's Fields: when they were obliged to recal him to his old ſtation, they imagined that Ben, acted firſt by Cibber, would bring ſeveral full houſes; and that the public's being afterwards excited to ſee their friend, Joe Miller, in the ſame character, would double their profits. I believe they were diſappointed in their expectations; for Cibber, though he acted Ben but two or three times, took off the edge of appetite to ſee Miller. Shepherd was a moſt ſpirited actor of the ſarcaſtic Sir Sampſon Legend. My old acquaintance, Jack Dunſtall, for many years played this part, as well as ſeveral others in comedy, with truth and nature. Jack had, indeed, the fault of correſponding by looks, ſometimes, with his acquaintance in the pit. His Hodge, John Moody, Lockit, Sir Jealous Traffic, Jobſon, and many other characters of the ſame caſt, will be remembered with pleaſure by his old friends, whom he often delighted with many a jovial ſong, and eſpecially that famous one on the ſea-victory obtained by Admiral Ruſſel over the French at La Hogue; this he ſang harmoniouſly, and with a true Engliſh ſpirit. Dunſtall was a member of ſeveral very reſpectable ſocieties, and vas valued, by all who knew him, for his honeſty and good-nature.

Theophilus

Theophilus Cibber's firſt wife acted Miſs Prue in an agreeable and lively manner. Clive gave ſuch a romping ſpirit and humorous vivacity to the wild girl, that even Abington's childiſh ſimplicity and playful aukwardneſs cannot make us forget her.

The theatre of Covent-garden, in December, 1732, opened with the Way of the World. The ſcenes were new, and excellently well painted; all the decorations were ſuited to the grandeur and magnificence of the building. The boxes were, on this occaſion, raiſed to half a guinea, the pit to five ſhillings, the galleries in proportion. The parts were thus diſtributed, as I remember:—Mirabel by Mr. Ryan; Quin, Fainall; Witwou'd, Chapman; Petulant, Neal; Sir Wilful Witwou'd, Hippiſley; Waitwell, Pinkethman, ſon of the famous Pinkey; Lady Wiſhfor't, Mrs. Eggleton; Millamant, Mrs. Younger; Marwood, Mrs. Hallam; Mrs. Fainall, Mrs. Buchanan; Foible, Mrs. Stephens, afterwards Mrs. Rich.—Quin was a judicious ſpeaker of Fainall's ſentiments, but heavy in action and deportment; Walker, who ſucceeded him, underſtood and expreſſed the aſſumed ſpirit and real inſolence of this artful character much better. Ryan was greatly inferior to the accompliſhed Mirabel of Wilks; and Chapman's Witwou'd, though not ſo finiſhed as that of Colley Cibber, was of his own drawing, and very comic. His quickneſs of ſpeech reſembled the articulate volubility of Mr. King, who is likewiſe a very pleaſing repreſenter of Witwou'd; and, as I ſhall not, perhaps, have an opportunity in any other place of this book, to ſpeak of this worthy man and excellent actor, I ſhall here pay him the juſt tribute due to his character.

racter. As an honeſt ſervant to the proprietors, engaged in a variety of parts, no man ever exerted his abilities to greater ſatisfaction of the public, or conſulted the intereſt of his employers with more cordiality and aſſiduity. As a manager, intruſted to ſuperintend, bring forward, and revive, dramatic pieces, his judgment was ſolid and his attention unwearied. When he thought proper to quit his poſt of theatrical director, thoſe of his own profeſſion regretted the loſs of a friend and companion, whoſe humanity and candour they had experienced, and on whoſe impartiality and juſtice they knew they could firmly depend.—Booth's character of the great actor, Smith, may be applied, with juſtice, to Mr. King: 'By his impartial management of the ſtage, and the affability of his temper, he merited the reſpect and eſteem of all within the theatre, the applauſe of thoſe without, and the good will and love of all mankind.'

Hippiſley, who acted Sir Wilful Witwou'd, was not an auricular imitator of another's manner; he was ſolely directed by the force of his own genius. Though he did not, in Sir Wilful, preſent to the ſpectator ſuch a laughable figure of a ſuperannuated lubber as Harper, his rival at Drury-lane, yet he pleaſed by dint of comic ſpirit and natural humour. Neal's Petulant was diverting, whimſical, and odd, though I believe not ſo critically juſt as Mr. Baddeley's.

Mrs. Younger's Millamant was ſpritely; but Oldfield's fine figure, attractive manner, harmonious voice, and elegance in dreſs, in which ſhe excelled all her predeceſſors and ſucceſſors except Mrs. Abington, left her without a rival. Mrs. Eggleton was a comic actreſs much admired by the

the beſt judges: John D. of Argyle, who was a frequenter of the theatre and a conſtant friend to the actors, took a particular pleaſure in ſeeing Mrs. Eggleton on the ſtage. With a great ſhare of merit, ſhe was extremely diffident, and never attempted a new character but with the utmoſt apprehenſion of her failing to pleaſe the audience. Mrs. Eggleton, like another Ariadne, died enamoured of Bacchus, about the year 1734.

Though, after the Way of the World, Congreve wrote no plays, he brought on the ſtage a maſque called the Judgment of Paris, and Semele, an opera. The muſic to the firſt was compoſed by Purcel, Eccles, Singer, and Weldon. It was revived at Drury-lane about fifty years ſince, with fine ſcenes and decorations. 'This piece,' the author of Biographia Dramatica ſays, 'is often performed to muſic by way of an oratorio.' The ſame author, ſpeaking of Semele, ſays, 'that this ſhort piece was performed, and printed in quarto, in 1707.'

The ſucceſs of this opera is not mentioned by this or any other writer. The ſtory is told by Ovid, in his Metamorphoſis, l. 3. but the author has made an alteration in the fable, more conformable to the characters of the opera.—Congreve has ſhewn himſelf a ſcholar and a poet in this dramatic piece; and I ſhould imagine, if revived, with proper muſic and good ſingers, it would pleaſe in repreſentation. The fable of this opera, which is not, as the Biographia Dramatica ſays, a ſhort poem, is well conducted. The meaſure of the airs is various, and ſuited to the ſituations of the perſonæ dramatis. The author accounts for having no regard to rime, or equality of meaſure, in that part of the dialogue deſigned for

for recitative, which, he ſays, is only a more tuneable ſpeaking and a kind of proſe in muſic.—Mr. John Beard and Mr. Joſeph Vernon excelled greatly in recitative, by giving uncommon force of expreſſion to the paſſions of love, grief, and reſentment.

Of almoſt all Congreve's poems, except his Ode on Mrs. Hunt, Dr. Johnſon ſpeaks with a marked contempt. The Birth of the Muſe he calls a wretched fiction. But Addiſon, in the dedication of his *Pax Gulielmi auſpiciis Europæ reddita*, to Montague, beſtows as much immoderate praiſe on the muſe of Congreve as abuſe on all the writers of his time who employed their pens on the ſubject of peace: *Quod ſi Congrevius ille tuus, divino quo ſolet furore correptus, materiam hanc non exornaſſet, vix tanti eſſet ipſa pax, ut illa lætaremur, tot perditiſſimis poetis tam miſere decantata.*—This encomium is unworthy of Addiſon, and indeed is nothing leſs than abſolute fuſtian; ſuch it will appear, to every reader, in Engliſh as well as Latin: 'Had not your Congreve, ſeized with his uſual fit of divine madneſs, condeſcended to celebrate the ſubject, *the peace itſelf would not have been of ſuch importance to us, nor could we, indeed, have rejoiced in it*, conſidering how vilely it has been debaſed by the pens of deſpicable ſcribblers."

Amongſt the poems of Prior, on King William's military atchievements, Addiſon might, with eaſe, have ſelected a better ſubject for his panegyric than Congreve's Birth of the Muſe; but Prior was, I believe, in no part of his life, a favourite of Addiſon.—Before Congreve wrote his laſt comedy, he publiſhed a formal defence of the four plays he had then written; in which there is ſome wit, a good deal of learning, many unwilling conceſſions, and no ſmall ſhare of diſingenuity. Congreve's pride

pride was hurt by Collier's attack on plays which all the world had admired and commended; and no hypocrite ſhewed more rancour and reſentment, when unmaſked, than this author, ſo greatly celebrated for ſweetneſs of temper and elegance of manners. It muſt be confeſſed, that Collier, in his view of the ſtage, had gone too far; he had forgotten the old axiom of *Ab abuſu ad uſum non valet conſequentia*; he would liſten to nothing leſs than the entire abolition of ſtage-amuſements and even of muſic itſelf; he reſembled too much the root-and-branch men, in the days of Charles I. who, not ſatisfied with reforming abuſes, determined to lay the axe to the root of monarchy, and deſtroy our conſtitution in church and ſtate.

I ſhall quote a paſſage, from Congreve's Defence, which I think worthy of the reader's peruſal.

'To what end has he made ſuch a bug-bear of the theatre? Why ſhould he poſſeſs the minds of weak and melancholy people with ſuch frightful ideas of a poor play, unleſs to ſour the humours of the people of moſt leiſure, that they might be more apt to miſemploy their vacant hours? It may be there is not any where a people who ſhould leſs be debarred of innocent diverſions than the people of England. I will not argue this point, but I will ſtrengthen my obſervations with one parallel to it from Polybius. This excellent author, who always moraliſes in his hiſtory, and inſtructs as faithfully as he relates, attributes the ruin of Cynethia, by the Ætolians, in plain terms, to the degeneracy from their Arcadian anceſtors, in their theatrical and muſical performances: "The Cynethians (ſays he) had their ſituation the fartheſt north of all Arcadia; they were ſubjected to an inclement and uncertain air, and, for the moſt part, cold and melancholic; and, for

this reaſon, they, of all people ſhould laſt have parted with the innocent and wholeſome remedies which the diverſions of muſic adminiſtered to that ſourneſs of temper and ſullenneſs of diſpoſition, which of neceſſity they muſt partake from the diſpoſition and influence of their climate: for, they no ſooner fell to neglect theſe wholeſome inſtitutions, than they fell into diſſenſions and civil diſcords, and grew at length into ſuch depravity of manners, that their crimes, in number and meaſure, ſurpaſſed all nations of the Greeks beſides."

Congreve quotes this from Sir Henry Sheers's Polybius, which is, I believe, rather an abridgment than a tranſlation. The whole paſſage, reſpecting the Cynethians, is well worth conſideration: and the reader will find it faithfully given by Mr. Hampton, vol. i. in his quarto edition, pages 358, 59, 60, 61.

Congreve, of all the poets in his time, enjoyed the peculiar happineſs of being reſpected and diſtinguiſhed by perſons the moſt eminent in the two contending parties, the whigs and tories, in every change of government, from his firſt appearance as a writer to the time of his death. More than that, he was addreſſed, courted and honoured, by all the authors of his time, a tribe of men who are not very remarkable for their love of ſuperior merit in their rivals—The differences of Parnaſſus were ſubmitted to his deciſion; and the decres of Congreve, the poetical chancellor, were ſubject to no reverſal. Even Dennis, the ſour and intractable Dennis, paid his homage to this writer, who honoured him with his correſpondence, and wrote to him ſeveral letters, which Dennis, afterwards publiſhed, and among the reſt, an excellent one upon humour. Congreve doubtleſs gave this Cerberus a ſop,

a ſop, as the beſt means to ſoften his rugged temper. When aſked why he liſtened to the praiſe of Dennis, he ſaid, he had much rather be flattered than abuſed. Swift had a particular friendſhip for our author, and generouſly took him under his protection in his high authoritative manner; he claimed the patronage of Lord Oxford for a man preferred by whig-miniſters, and who ſtill retained whig-principles.—Dr. Johnſon ſays, that Congreve diſcovered more literature than the poets have commonly attained. I have already mentioned his acquaintance with the Greek dramatic writers, a ſtudy which ſeems to have been neglected by moſt of our former play-authors. Mr. Colman, Mr. Murphy, and Mr. Cumberland, are converſant with the antient writers of Greece and Rome; and it is to be hoped, that the tranſlation of Æſchylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, by Dr. Potter, Dr. Franklin, and Mr. Woodhull, and the remarks of Mr. Jodderell upon the Bacchæ and Ion of Euripides, in which he has diſplayed exquiſite taſte and moſt extenſive learning, will excite the curioſity and induſtry of our preſent and future dramatiſts, more eſpecially our tragedians, to become acquainted with the great originals of Athens.

To have done with Congreve: the charms of his converſation muſt have been very powerful, ſince nothing could conſole Henrietta Dutcheſs of Marlborough, for the loſs of his company, ſo much as an automaton, or ſmall ſtatue of ivory, made exactly to reſemble him, which every day was brought to table. A glaſs was put in the hand of the ſtatue, which was ſuppoſed to bow to her grace and to nod in approbation of what ſhe ſpoke to it.

Betterton.

Betterton.

CHAP. XLVI.

Some miſtakes relating to Betterton in the Biographia Britannica.—His age.—Old Downs's Roſcius Anglicanus.—Betterton's marriage.—No ſtage-miſſes till after the revolution.—Superior merit of the king's actors.—Spectacle and muſic.—Winterſel, &c.—Dryden and Lee.—Hart's ſalary.—Cauſes of the declenſion of the king's comedians.—Agreement between Hart, &c. and Betterton, &c.—Hart's death.—Mohun and Nell Gwin.—Union of the companies.—Betterton's loſs by a venture.—Mrs. Barry, Mrs. Bracegirdle, Mrs. Montfort, and Mrs. Boman.—Betterton's ſalary.—Chriſtopher Rich.—Cibber and John Rich.—The family of John Rich offended.—King William, Betterton, and Mrs. Barry.—Powel.—Mrs. Montfort.—Betterton's laſt benefit and death.—Character of Mrs. Betterton.—Her inſanity.—Time of her death uncertain.—Cibber's portrait of Betterton.—Commended for his humanity.—Friendſhip of Pope and Betterton.—The latter's picture by Pope.—Chaucer's characters.—Epitaph recommended by Pope.—Congreve fellow-manager with Betterton.—Booth.—Wilks.—Dramatic pieces of Betterton.—Mrs. Booth's piety.—Betterton and Garrick.

AS, in the courſe of theſe Miſcellanies, I have neglected no opportunity to do juſtice to the merits of that accompliſhed actor and reſpectable man, Mr. Thomas Betterton, I ſhall have leſs occaſion to enlarge here upon the ſubject. The compilers of the Biographia Britannica, a work which confers

fers honour upon themſelves and the nation, have very aſſiduouſly laboured to clear up the obſcurities in which the life of this eminent man is involved. In a matter of great difficulty, and where ſo little authentic information can be obtained, it is not ſurpriſing that a few miſtakes ſhould eſcape the moſt inquiſitive intelligence. I ſhall endeavour to rectify ſome errors in that work, and to throw light on certain facts, which have, through length of time, been ſomewhat darkened.

I do not find, that, in the article of Betterton, the writers of this valuable work have made any uſe of Downs's Roſcius Anglicanus; and, though it muſt be confeſſed that Downs is very confuſed and inaccurate, yet, as he is almoſt the only writer on the ſtage for a long period, ſome valuable matter may, with curious ſearching, be picked out of his pamphlet. His authority, relating to the age of Betterton, muſt give place to the more authentic teſtimony of Southern, adduced in the Biographia, who, it ſeems, had his intelligence from the mouth of the great actor himſelf. By this account, he was born in 1635, though Downs places his birth three years later; and this ſeems a little ſurpriſing, as the Roſcius Anglicanus was publiſhed in the life time of Betterton, who muſt have converſed with the author almoſt continually from 1662 to 1706, the date of his Narrative.

The marriage of Betterton with Mrs. Saunderſon is fixed, in the Biographia Britannica and Biographia Dramatica, to the year of 1670. But the exact time is very uncertain: it appears, from Downs, that the Villain, a tragedy, and Shakſpeare's Henry the Eighth, were revived, at the duke's theatre, before the plague of London, in 1665; and the name of Mrs. Betterton is placed

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to Belmont in the Villain, and to Q. Katharine in Henry the Eighth; conſequently the marriage muſt have taken place five years ſooner than the time ſettled by theſe writers. It muſt be obſerved, that, though Mrs. Saunderſon was very young when married to Betterton, ſhe retained the appellation of miſtreſs; mademoiſelle, or miſs,* though introduced amongſt people of faſhion, in England about the latter end of Charles II.'s reign, was not familiar to the middle claſs of people till a much later time, nor in uſe amongſt the players till toward the latter end of King William's reign. Miſs Croſs was the firſt of the ſtage-miſſes: ſhe is particularly noticed in Joe Haines's epilogue to Farquhar's Love and a Bottle.

It is generally allowed, that the ſuperior ſucceſs of the king's theatre obliged the duke of York's company to have recourſe to ſpectacle and muſic; and this, ſays Cibber, introduced that ſpecies of repreſentation called dramatic operas. I have heard, from the beſt information of ſome very old perſons, who lived in the reign of Charles II. that Betterton, as a general actor, was ſuperior to any one comedian of his time. But Hart and Mohun, the great actors of the king's houſe, had Kynaſton, Winterſel, and ſeveral other original players in tragedy, to ſecond them; nor were the comic actors of the king's houſe much inferior to thoſe of the duke's theatre.

Dryden and Lee, the two court poets, wrote for the king's theatre, while that was in a flouriſhing ſtate. Hart's ſalary, in the Biogr. Brit. was 3l. per week. This muſt be underſtood to be independent

* Miſs was formerly underſtood to mean a woman of pleaſure: ſo Dryden, in his epilogue to the Pilgrim, written in 1700:

Miſſes there were, but modeſtly conceal'd.

pendent of the profits ariſing from his ſhare in the houſe, clothes, and ſcenes; for the principal performers of that theatre were ſharers; and Downs ſays, that, at the end of a playing ſeaſon, they ſometimes divided amongſt them 1000l. each.

The declenſion of the king's theatre muſt not ſolely be aſcribed to the growing taſte for operas, muſic, and dancing. About the year 1680, they had loſt, by death or retirement from the ſtage, ſeveral actors of great merit; Burt, Winterſel, Cartwright, Lacy, and others; beſides, the declining age of the great maſters in their profeſſion, Hart and Mohun, rendered them leſs capable of action than in the prime and vigour of life; the young actors too, ſuch as Goodman and Clarke, were become impatient to get poſſeſſion of the principal characters. More than all this, I ſuſpect a rupture to have taken place between Hart and Mohun; for, in the agreement, ſigned, Oct. 14, 1681, between Dr. Davenant, Thomas Betterton, Gent. and W. Smith, Gent. on the one part, and Charles Hart and Edward Kynaſton on the other, the intent of which was to effect an union of the two companies,—no notice whatever is taken of Mohun, who acted after Hart's death, in 1682, at the king's theatre, in the firſt play written by Southern, called the Perſian Prince. Nell Gwin in the ſame play repreſented a principal character.

The time when the companies were united, the author of Betterton's article, in the Biogr. Brit. rightly ſays, was uncertain. He ſuſpects that the union was not effected till 1686; but, by looking on the date of Dryden and Lee's Duke of Guiſe, the firſt edition, which was printed in 1683, by the title-page and the dramatis perſonæ, I find,

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that Betterton and company were then in poſſeſſion of the king's theatre.

Betterton was eſteemed a very able negotiator, and was certainly very inſtrumental in bringing about the union of the companies. His conduct, on this occaſion, did not eſcape cenſure; I ſuppoſe chiefly from Mohun and thoſe who oppoſed the junction, and perſiſted to act in oppoſition to Betterton at the king's theatre, though they had loſt Hart and Kynaſton; but all unprejudiced perſons will clear him from any reprehenſion, for endeavouring to bring about what was become abſolutely neceſſary. K. Charles himſelf, it is ſaid, approved and recommended the treaty for an union.

The misfortune which Betterton ſuſtained, by loſing the greateſt part of his fortune in a venture to the Eaſt-Indies, is very exactly related in the Biographia Britannica. His behaviour, on this memorable occaſion, reflects honour on the magnanimity of his mind; his taking into his houſe, and educating at his own expence, the daughter of his ruined friend who had engaged him in the unhappy adventure, places him in a rank with Satyrus, the Greek comedian, whoſe generoſity to the captive daughters of his dead hoſt I have related in my obſervations on the ſecond act of Hamlet. The daughter of Betterton's unhappy friend was married to Mr. Bowman, whom I have often had occaſion to mention; ſhe was admired as a very fine woman and a pleaſing actreſs. The ſtage, perhaps, never produced four ſuch handſome women, at once, as * Mrs. Barry, Mrs. Bracegirdle, Mrs. Mountfort, and Mrs. Bowman: when they appeared

* The illiberal hiſtorian of the two ſtages ſays,—Mrs. Barry was the fineſt woman *on* the ſtage, and the reverſe when off.

peared together, in the laſt ſcene of the Old Batchelor, the audience was ſtruck with ſo fine a groupe of beauty, and broke out into loud applauſes.

It is to be lamented that Betterton, when acting-manager, and conſtantly labouring to pleaſe the public in a variety of characters, ſhould have ſo little real influence and ſo ſmall a portion of the profits; this great actor's ſalary never riſing to more than 4l. per week. Chriſtopher Rich, father to the late John Rich, Eſq; of Covent-Garden, poſſeſſed the greateſt ſhare of the patent; and, if we may believe Colley Cibber, he employed all his arts to diſtreſs the actors, though not really to benefit himſelf. In ſhort, Cibber makes him out a man who had neither conſcience nor ability: he draws ſo hateful a character of obſtinacy, low cunning, tyranny, and perverſeneſs, that humanity would induce us to ſuppoſe the writer had drawn a caricatura rather than a real portrait. Yet Cibber and the ſon of this man, I well remember, always appeared to live on very friendly terms, even after the publication of the Apology. It was my ill fortune, it ſeems, to diſpleaſe the family of John Rich, by attributing to him, in my Memoirs of Mr. Garrick, ſome whimſical peculiarities, which, at the ſame time, I ſaid were owing to the neglect of his education. My aſcribing to him ſeveral amiable qualities, beſides commending his profeſſional abilities at large, did not, it ſeems, appeaſe their anger; but they ſhould conſider, I was not writing the lives of the ſaints.

To return to Betterton. Rich and his partners carried their oppreſſion of the players to ſuch a height, that an application to the throne, for redreſs, became abſolutely neceſſary. The nobility,

lity, and all perſons of eminence, favoured the cauſe of the comedians; the generous Dorſet introduced Betterton, Mrs. Barry, Mrs. Bracegirdle, and others, to the king, who granted them an audience. William, though deficient in the charm of affability and condeſcenſion, with which Charles, his uncle, captivated all who approached him, was yet ready to extend his favour to the players. He was not diſpleaſed to ſee in his preſence two ſuch wonders in the theatrical world as Betterton and Mrs. Barry, whoſe keen expreſſive looks commanded attention and reſpect. William, who had freed all the ſubjects of England from ſlavery, except the inhabitants of the mimical world, reſcued them alſo from the inſolence and tyranny of their oppreſſors.

In a note, in the Biog. Brit. relating to Powell, who was vain enough to think himſelf a rival to Betterton, this player is treated with too much contempt. Cibber, though an enemy, does not rate him ſo low as this writer, but attributes his not riſing to a greater degree of perfection in his profeſſion, to too much confidence, to idleneſs, and to intemperance. Though Addiſon, in the Spectator, animadverts upon Powell's tragic extravagances in ſome ſituations of character, upon the whole he highly commends him; nor would the difficult part of Oreſtes, in the Diſtreſſed Mother, have been put into his hands, by Wilks, Dogget, and Cibber, if Addiſon and the author had not choſen him for the part.

Another note, in the ſame Biographia, mentions Mrs. Mountfort and Mrs. Verbruggen as belonging to Rich's company of comedians. The writer did not know, or at leaſt had forgotten, that Mrs. Mountfort was, by her ſecond marriage, become

come Mrs. Verbruggen. This admirable comic actreſs died in childbed, 1703.

After Betterton had, for ſeveral years, acted as chief manager, under King William's patent, at the theatre in the Tennis-court, Lincoln's-inn fields, with various ſucceſs, he found that age and diſeaſes, accompanied with frequent fits of the gout, advanced ſo faſt upon him, that he was obliged to reſign the management of the theatre, and to act only particular parts as often as his health would permit. By his laſt two benefits he is thought to have gained near 1000l. and yet his circumſtances, at his death, were reproachful to an age of which he was ſo great an ornament. He died April 28, 1710, and was buried in Weſtminſter-abbey. Steele's reflections, in his Tatler of May the 2d, on Betterton's funeral, are written with the tender feelings of a friend, and in a ſtyle dignified with ſentiment and pathos.

Mrs. Betterton was the faithful companion and fellow-labourer of this great comedian for more than five-and-forty years. She excelled in comedy and tragedy; and was, according to Cibber, ſo ſuperior in repreſenting ſome of Shakſpeare's characters, eſpecially Lady Macbeth, that even Mrs. Barry could not approach her in ſome particular touches of the madneſs incidental to that part.—Her underſtanding was ſolid, and her addreſs gentle and polite; while her huſband inſtructed the noble male-performers in Crown's Caliſto, acted at court in 1675, Mrs. Betterton gave leſſons to the Princeſſes Mary and Anne, daughters of James Duke of York, and Mrs Sarah Jennings, afterwards the famous Dutcheſs of Marlborough. She likewiſe taught the Princeſs Anne the part of Semandra, in the tragedy of Mithridates, which was

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alſo acted at court. Betterton was naturally of a cheerful diſpoſition, and had a very high confidence in Providence. The wife was of a thoughtful and melancholy temper; ſhe was ſo ſtrongly affected with his death, that ſhe ran diſtracted, though ſhe appeared rather a prudent and conſtant than a fond and paſſionate wife. They had no children: William Betterton, ſaid to be his ſon by ſome miſtaken writers, who was drowned in bathing, at Wallingford, in 1662, was a man very near as old as himſelf, as will appear on conſulting Downs; nor is it known that he was at all related to our Betterton.

A lady, intimately acquainted with Mrs. Betterton, amongſt other particulars which ſhe communicated to the compilers of the Biographia Britannica, informed them, that, ſome time before her death, ſhe recovered her ſenſes. Pity it is, that the ſame lady did not inform them of the exact time when ſhe died. The Biographia Dramatica aſſerts, poſitively, that ſhe left the world ſix months after the death of her huſband; in the Biographia Britannica, it is more cautiouſly ſaid, that, *according to the beſt information*, ſhe died within that time. But, that ſhe was alive about thirteen months after, viz. June 4, 1711, I ſhall prove, from the following playhouſe-advertiſement, taken from the original edition of the Spectator:

At the particular deſire of ſeveral ladies of quality.

For the benefit of the widow of the late famous tragedian, Mr. Betterton,

At the theatre-royal in Drury-lane, this preſent Monday, the 4th of June,

Will be preſented a comedy, called the

MAN OF MODE, or Sir Foplin Flutter.

Betterton's character, as an actor, is drawn by Cibber in ſo maſterly a ſtyle, that nothing equal to it, on the ſubject of acting, is to be found, I believe, in any language. Though to attempt any addition, to Cibber's complete enumeration of Betterton's talents, would be impertinent, and, at this diſtance of time, ridiculous,—to pick up a few particulars, relating to this extraordinary man, from books and oral tradition, may not be altogether unentertaining.

Betterton was not only celebrated for his polite behaviour to the dramatic writers of his time, but alſo his great modeſty, in not preſuming to underſtand any characters which they offered to him till he had their repeated inſtructions. Beſides this, I find him commended, in ſome verſes publiſhed in the State-poems, for his humanity, in opening his purſe, to ſuch writers whoſe wants ſtood in need of his aſſiſtance, and till the ſucceſs of their piece on a third night enabled them to repay

pay their kind lender. I remember that he is, in one poem, called, the poet's banker. Unlike Colley Cibber, he treated authors with good nature and good manners, never aſſuming haughty and inſolent behaviour. By his and Mrs. Barry's ſuperior exertions, many an indifferent play paſſed on the public, in acting, for a work of merit, the wonderful ſkill of the actor ſupplying all deficiencies. The dramatic writers of thoſe times appear to have been fully convinced of his inclination and abilities to forward their works on the ſtage.—Some of them have left teſtimonies of their deference to his judgment and regard for his friendſhip; particularly Dryden, in the beginning of his preface to Don Sebaſtian, and Rowe in the latter part of Shakſpeare's Life.

Nothing can give us a higher idea of the ſweetneſs of his temper, and of his great affability, than the effect his behaviour produced on Pope, who, when firſt brought into his company, muſt have been very young, and, in all probability, a mere boy. So charmed was Pope with the good old man, and he with Pope, that, at his requeſt, Betterton ſat to him for his picture, which he drew in oil. This curioſity is ſtill to be ſeen at Caenwood, in the poſſeſſion of Lord Mansfield.—So eager was Pope to enlarge Betterton's fame, that he publiſhed, in his Miſcellany, the prologues of Chaucer, modernized, in his name; but the true modernizer, we have reaſon to believe, was Pope himſelf: Fenton, we are told by Dr. Johnſon, offered him five pounds if he would produce thoſe poems in Betterton's hand writing.

From Pope's literary correſpondence with Mr Cromwell, it appears, he had informed him tha

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he intended to take care of Betterton's remains, meaning, I ſuppoſe, this good-natured poſthumous forgery. Pope, in a P. S. to one of his letters, writes thus: This letter of deaths puts me in mind of poor Betterton's! over whom I would have this ſentence of Tully for an epitaph, which will ſerve for his moral as well as his theatrical capacity:

* Vitæ bene actæ jucundiſſima eſt recordatio.

That Betterton was much reſpected and eſteemed, by perſons of the higheſt rank and greateſt eminence, cannot be queſtioned. By his intereſt with Lord Dorſet and other noblemen, a patent was granted for the building a new theatre. Congreve condeſcended to accept a ſhare in this playhouſe, and to be a joint manager with Betterton; but Congreve afterwards ſpurned the low degrees by which he roſe to diſtinction, and, in his anſwer to Collier, pretty plainly condemns thoſe who occaſioned his playhouſe connexion.

It is ſaid, that this author wrote an occaſional prologue, which was ſpoken by Mrs. Bracegirdle, as Mr. Rowe did an epilogue, ſpoken by Mrs. Barry, on the benefit-night of Betterton, April, 1709: but, although the epilogue remains a laſting teſtimony of the author's ſincere regard for his old friend, the prologue was withdrawn, and never appeared in print †.

Smith, an actor whom Booth terms almoſt equal to Betterton, lived in the utmoſt harmony with

* Sweet is the remembrance of a life well acted.

† Life of Congreve, part 2, p. 11.

with him till the death of the former in 1695. They had long been aſſociates in the management of the theatre, nor was it known that they ever fell into the leaſt variance. Booth ſpoke of Betterton always with reſpect and veneration. While living he paid him filial duty, and the other proved a ſecond father to him, by his kind admonitions and friendly inſtructions. It was his conſtant practice to encourage young players that manifeſted any degree of merit with becoming modeſty.—Wilks played Lyſippus, in the Maid's Tragedy, for his firſt part in London: when he ſpoke to Betterton, who acted Melantius, he was ſo ſtruck with awe and ſurpriſe, that he could ſcarcely utter a line. Betterton, inſtead of diſcouraging him, revived his ſpirits, by telling him, that apprehenſive fear of an audience, in a young actor, was no ill ſign of intrinſic merit. When the mean parſimony of Chriſtopher Rich, and his partners, obliged Wilks to think ſeriouſly of returning to Dublin, Betterton laboured to convince them, though in vain, of their imprudence in parting with a young man of ſuch abilities.

Of Betterton as an author, who wrote ſome plays and altered others, more cannot with truth be ſaid, than that, by his perfect knowledge of the ſtage, he conducted the plot and diſpoſed the ſcenes in ſuch a manner as to produce dramatic effect. Downs aſſures us, that moſt, if not all, of his pieces were much applauded and followed; but, notwithſtanding they were well approved by the public, he ſeems to have thought very modeſtly of them, for he never would conſent to publiſh one of them. His Amorous Widow, or Wanton Wife,

Wife, was long the favourite of the town. Part of this play, I mean the plot of the Wanton Wife, which is taken from Moliere's George Dandin, is now often acted as a farce, in which Mr. Quick and Mrs. Mattocks play the principal parts to great advantage.

The piety of Mrs. Booth raiſed a monument to the memory of her huſband in Weſtminſter-abbey; but, though it is ſaid that Wilks, Dogget, and Cibber, and Booth, Wilks, and Cibber, ſucceſſively patentees of Drury-lane theatre, talked of paying due reſpect in marble to their old maſter in the ſame cathedral, they did not put their intention into practice. Mr. Garrick, who on all occaſions, was ready to promote any public or generous deſign, could not have erected a more laſting monument to his own fame than by perpetuating the memory of a man who was ſo eminent an ornament of the Engliſh ſtage; a man, who, for univerſality of genius, was the only actor who could be compared to himſelf. For, if Garrick played Lear and Abel Drugger, the other acted Othello and Sir Toby Belch; the former's Hamlet and Scrub are not parts more diſtinct or diſtant from each other than Betterton's Hotſpur and Falſtaff; the latter's Alexander the Great and Sir Solomon Single may be fairly contraſted with Garrick's Richard the Third and the School-boy. They were both accompliſhed maſters of their profeſſion; and ſcarcely any part, in the whole perſonæ dramatis, could be too difficult for their conſummate abilities.

In Garrick's muſeum, you might have ſeen multiplied paintings and engravings of himſelf, in various characters; but no picture or

print, that I can call to mind, of any other actor *.

* Though I have proved, from the title and dramatis perſonæ of the Duke of Guiſe, that Betterton, Kynaſton, &c. were in poſſeſſion of Drury-lane theatre in 1683, I find, by the title and characters of Banks's Unhappy Favourite, that this play was acted at the ſame theatre, in 1685, by ſome of the old company; by Clarke, Griffin, Major Mohun, Mrs. Gwin, and others.

Neither the author's prologue, nor Dryden's prologue and epilogue, give any light into this obſcure matter.

Colley

Colley Cibber.

CHAP. XLVII.

Reformation of the ſtage owing to a player.—Cibber's Love's laſt Shift.—Richard Norton, Eſq.—Dennis.—Careleſs Huſband and Provoked Huſband.—Laſt act of Love's laſt Shift.—Cibber a reproach to other comic writers.—The people not ſo licentious as the dramatic poets.—Cibber's mean income.—Sir Novelty Faſhion a good picture of fops.—His remarkable dreſs.—Actreſs of Narciſſa.—Hillaria and Amanda.—Amanda.—Sir William Wiſewood.—Ben Jonſon, the actor.—Mr. Horden, an accompliſhed player, killed.—Roſe-tavern.—George Powell.—Nantz-brandy. Cibber and Verbruggen.—Richard Croſs's Account of Maſter Colley.—Mr. Alexander.—Cibber a ſervant in Sir Antony Love.—Verbruggen and the Duke of St. A.—An odd apology.—Cheſterfield and Cibber.—The latter's character by a certain writer.—Verbruggen's Oroonoko.—Tom Elrington.—Barry and Garrick.—More relating to Verbruggen.—Vanbrugh's Relapſe.—His comic muſe.—Lord Foppington, Cibber's chief excellence.—Cibber's Æſop.—Mr. Henderſon.—Prolific muſe of Vanbrugh.—Swift and Pope.—Cibber's Sir John Brute.—Quin and Garrick.—Compariſon between Cibber and Garrick.—A cap for the ladies, by Mr. Garrick.—Cibber's Xerxes. Betterton and Mrs. Barry.—Careleſs Huſband;—character of the play.—Cibber and Mrs. Porter.—Mrs Oldfield;—deſcribed at length.—Her great abilities.—Mr. Manwaring and General Churchill.—Prince and Princeſs of Wales.—Mr. Pope.—Narciſſa.—Mrs. Saunders.—Tragedy and

Mrs. Oldfield. — Sophoniſba. — Mrs. Oldfield's confounding a hiſſing ſpectator. — Her Lady Townly.—Mrs. Heron and Mrs. Woffington.—Wilks in Lord Townly.—Mr. Garrick—Barry.—Cibber's two unlucky paſſions.—His acting tragedy.—Iago.—Mr. Macklin's Iago and Barry's Othello.—Cibber exploded in Scipio.—Cibber a manager.—Choking ſinging birds;—Cibber's method of it.—An anecdote.—Colonel Brett.—Cibber accuſed of pilfering from plays left in his hands.—His method of treating authors.—Wilks and Booth. — Dogget;—his character.—Dicky Norris and Bullock. — Mrs. Porter.—Cibber's love of gaming.—Sir Courtly Nice.—Wilks a reformer. — Powell—Original Spectator—Addiſon and Steele.—Powell and a bailiff.—Cibber miſtaken.—Booth beloved.—Harper and Shepherd.—The Settle.—Power of Envy.—Garrick and Cibber.—Cibber's repartee to Garrick.—Elrington.—Cibber's character concluded.

TO a player we are indebted for the reformation of the ſtage. The firſt comedy, acted ſince the Reſtoration, in which were preſerved purity of manners and decency of language, with a due reſpect to the honour of the marriage-bed, was Colley Cibber's Love's laſt Shift, or the Fool in Faſhion. The principal plot of this play was not unknown to the Engliſh theatre: Amanda's ſcheme to allure her profligate huſband to her arms, by perſonating another woman, reſembles the contrivance of Helen in All's well that ends well, and ſtill more, I believe, the wife's ſcheme in Shirley's Gameſter. The ſucceſs of this piece exceeded greatly the author's expectation; but ſo little was hoped from the genius of Cibber, that the critics reproached him with ſtealing his play.

To

To his cenſurers he makes a ſerious defence of himſelf, in his dedication to Richard Norton, Eſq. of Southwick, a gentleman who was ſo fond of ſtage plays and players, that he has been accuſed of turning his chapel into a theatre.

The furious John Dennis, who hated Cibber, for obſtructing, as he imagined, the progreſs of his tragedy called The Invader of his Country, in very paſſionate term denies his claim to this comedy: 'When the Fool in Faſhion was firſt acted,' ſays the critic, 'Cibber was hardly twenty years of age; now could he, at the age of twenty, write a comedy with a juſt deſign, diſtinguiſhed characters, and a proper dialogue, who now, at 40, treats us with Hibernian ſenſe and Hibernian Engliſh?'

Poor Cibber! it was his hard fate to have his beſt comedies attributed to any body but himſelf. His Careleſs Huſband was, for a long time, given to the Duke of Argyle and other noblemen. Nothing could put an end to ſuch ungenerous and weak ſuggeſtions but his ſcenes of high life in the Provoked Huſband, which he proved to be his own by printing the unfiniſhed MS. of Sir John Vanbrugh's play, called a Journey to London. Some comic characters of this writer were ſeverely treated by the audience, becauſe ſuppoſed to be written by Cibber.

In Love's laſt Shift, the audience were particularly charmed with the great ſcene, in the laſt act, where the ill-treated and abandoned wife reveals herſelf to her ſurpriſed and admiring huſband The joy of unexpected reconcilement, from Loveleſs's remorſe and penitence, ſpread ſuch an uncommon rapture of pleaſure in the audience, that never were ſpectators more happy in eaſing their minds

by

by uncommon and repeated plaudits. The honeſt tears, ſhed by the audience at this interview, conveyed a ſtrong reproach to our licentious poets, and to Cibber the higheſt mark of honour. The uncommon run of this comedy, which I have been told formerly, by ſeveral who lived at that time, was greatly admired and followed, is a convincing proof that the people at large are never ſo vicious as to abandon the cauſe of decency and virtue, and that it was entirely owing to our dramatic writers themſelves, that plays were not leſſons of morality as well as amuſements of pleaſure. While Congreve's plays were acted with applauſe at Lincoln's-inn fields theatre, Cibber's Love's laſt Shift, Vanbrugh's Relapſe, and Southern's Oroonoko, were ſucceſsfully oppoſed to them at Drury-lane. But, while Cibber, by his new comedy, and his peculiar merit in acting foppiſh and other parts, drew crouds after him, the parſimonious and ungrateful patentees allotted him no larger income than thirty or forty ſhillings per week.

Sir Novelty Faſhion was a true picture of manners in the fop of the times. Before this author wrote, our affected gentlemen of the ſtage were, I believe, not quite ſo entertaining with their extravagances, nor ſo learned in their profeſſion of foppery. Etheridge's Sir Fopling Flutter is rather a copy of Moliere's Marquis than a thing of Engliſh growth. Crown's Sir Courtly Nice is, in a few ſhadows, diſtinct from the other, by being more inſignificantly ſoft and more pompouſly important. Sir Courtly's ſong, of 'ſtop thief!' is a tranſlation from a ſonnet of the French poet. The preſenting the reader with Sir Novelty's dreſs will revive the idea of the long-forgotten beau of King William's time. In the genuine language of a fop,

who

who expects his miſtreſs ſhould admire him for his outſide decoration rather than the accompliſhments of his mind, Sir Novelty tells Narciſſa, that his fine faſhioned ſuit raiſes a great number of ribbon-weavers: 'In ſhort, madam, the cravat-ſtring, the garter, the ſword-knot, the cinctürine, the bardaſh, the ſteinkirk, the large button, the plume, and full peruke, were all created, cried down, and revived by me.' Such a dreſs of antient foppery, exhibited at a maſquerade, would draw as many admirers as any habit of modern invention.

In his Narciſſa, acted by Mrs. Montfort, Cibber drew an outline of a coquet in high life; of which character he afterwards made a finiſhed picture, in his Lady Betty Modiſh. Beſides the reforming the moral of comedy, Cibber was the firſt who introduced men and women of high quality on the ſtage, and gave them language and manners ſuitable to their rank and birth.

Mrs. Cibber, the wife of Colley, whoſe name is ſeldom to be found in any of the perſonæ dramatis, was his Hillaria. So much depended on Amanda, and eſpecially in the two laſt acts, that the ſucceſs of the play muſt, in ſome meaſure, be owing to the actreſs, Mrs. Rogers, who continued a favourite of the public till her merit was eclipſed by the ſuperior ſplendor of an Oldfield. Sir William Wiſewou'd, the old gentleman, who pretends to great command over his paſſions, and is conſtantly ſubdued by them, is, I think, a new character; and, I believe, the firſt, of conſequence, which gave old Ben Jonſon an opportunity to diſcover his great comic powers: he had been juſt brought to London from an itinerant company. The audience ſaw his merit, and cheriſhed it through life, from 1695 to 1742.

Mr.

Mr. Horden, the ſon of a clergyman, a very promiſing young actor, and remarkable for his fine perſon, was the young Worthy. This gentleman was bred a ſcholar: he complimented George Powell, in a Latin encomium, on his Treacherous Brothers. He was ſoon after killed, in an accidental fray, at the bar of the Roſe-tavern, which was at that time remarkable for entertaining all ſorts of company, and ſubject, of conſequence, to riot and diſorder. In this houſe George Powell ſpent great part of his time; and often toaſted, to intoxication, his miſtreſs, with bumpers of Nantz-brandy; he came ſometimes ſo warm, with that noble ſpirit, to the theatre, that he courted the ladies, ſo furiouſly on the ſtage, that, in the opinion of Sir John Vanbrugh, they were almoſt in danger of being conquered on the ſpot.—Powell was a principal player of Drury-lane when Love's laſt Shift was firſt acted: ſome quarrel or difference between him and Cibber, we may reaſonably ſuppoſe, prevented his having a part in the play, conſidering there were two at leaſt, well-ſuited to his abilities, Loveleſs and Young Worthy. Verbruggen he choſe to repreſent the former. As the Miſcellanies are drawing to a concluſion, I ſhall not have ſo fit an opportunity to do juſtice to the merits of an actor of whom Cibber ſpeaks ſo ſparingly and coldly.

Cibber and Verbruggen were two diſſipated young fellows, who determined, in oppoſition to the advice of friends, to become great actors.—Much about the ſame time, they were conſtant attendants upon Downs, the prompter of Drury-lane, in expectation of employment. What the firſt part was, in which Verbruggen diſtinguiſhed himſelf, cannot now be known. But Mr. Richard Croſs, late prompter of Drury-lane theatre, gave me

me the following hiſtory of Colley Cibber's firſt eſtabliſhment as a hired actor. He was known only, for ſome years, by the name of Maſter Colley. After waiting impatiently a long time for the prompter's notice, by good fortune he obtained the honour of carrying a meſſage on the ſtage, in ſome play, to Betterton. Whatever was the cauſe, Maſter Colley was ſo terrified, that the ſcene was diſconcerted by him. Betterton aſked, in ſome anger, who the young fellow was that had committed the blunder? Downs replied, 'Maſter Colley.'—'Maſter Colley! then forfeit him.'—'Why, ſir,' ſaid the prompter, 'he has no ſalary.'—'No!' ſaid the old man; 'why then put him down ten ſhillings a week, and forfeit him five ſhillings."

To this good-natured adjuſtment of reward and puniſhment, Cibber owed the firſt money he took *in* the treaſurer's office.

Verbruggen was ſo paſſionately fond of Alexander the Great, at that time the hero of the actors, that the players and the public knew him, for ſome years, by no other name. I have ſeen the name of Mr. Alexander to ſeveral parts in Dryden's plays; to Ptolemy in Cleomenes King of Sparta, to Aurelius in K. Arthur, and Ramirez in Love triumphant, or Nature will prevail. Verbruggen, I believe, did not aſſume his own name, in the playhouſe bills, till the ſeceſſion of Betterton and others, from Drury-lane, in 1695. The author of the Laureat ſays, that the name of Colley was inſerted in the characters of ſeveral plays. For this I have ſearched in vain; the earlieſt proof of Cibber's appearing in any part is amongſt the dramatis perſonæ of Southern's Sir

dom failed; but he was not equally ſucceſsful in Oroonoko; the luſtre of his eye was loſt in the ſhade of the black colour; nor was his voice ſo finely adapted to the melting and paſſionate addreſſes and feelings of the lover as to the more violent emotions of the heart. A farther confirmation of Cibber's unfair repreſentation of Verbruggen's merit was the conſtant reſpect paid to him by ſuch capable judges of merit as Congreve and Rowe, who truſted him with ſome of their moſt difficult characters. He was the original Bajazet; and the author of the Laureat thinks that the part has not been equally acted ſince. It is ſaid, he once boaſted that he frightened a bailiff from purſuit of him, by *putting on his Bajazet's look of terror*. Elrington was, in Bajazet, as well as in other tragic characters, a fine copy of Verbruggen. When the managers of Drury-lane gave Bajazet to Elrington, in preference to John Mills, the latter complained to Booth of the diſgrace: Booth told him, Elrington would make nine ſuch actors as Mills. When Verbruggen died we have no certain account; nor can I find his name to any part in a new play later than that of Sullen in the Stratagem, acted originally in 1707. To ſum up his character in the words of a late author: 'He was, in many parts, an excellent actor. In Caſſius, Oroonoko, Ventidius, Chamont, Pierre, Cethegus, (in tragedy,) as well as ſeveral in comedy, as the Rover, &c. he was an original; and had a roughneſs, and a negligent agreeable wildneſs, in his manner, action, and mein, which became him well *.

Cibber's next ſtep to fame was his being honoured by Sir John Vanbrugh, with a continuation

* Laureat, p. 58.

tion of his Love's laſt Shift, in the Relapſe, or Virtue in Danger. Of all language in comedy, that of this author is the moſt natural, and the moſt eaſy to learn by rote. The Thalia of Vanbrugh reſembles a female who charms by the native beauty of her perſon, the ſprightlineſs of her air, and ſimplicity of her dreſs; though, at the ſame time, ſhe exerts her influence to ſteal into your heart and corrupt it. The ſtyle of this writer is more the language of converſation than his friend Congreve's. Dine when you will with the latter, you are ſure to feaſt: to have the choiceſt fiſh, pheaſant, partridge, veniſon, turtle, &c. With the other you have delicious fare, it is true, but blended with the plaineſt diſhes: the ſurloin is not baniſhed to the ſide-board, nor will you be at a loſs to find a joint of mutton.

The coxcomb-knight, Sir Novelty, in the Fool in Faſhion, is, in the Relapſe, dignified with a title. Lord Foppington is exalted into a higher degree of folly than the knight; the author has placed him in more whimſical ſituations to excite mirth. Cibber's Foppington I have often ſeen: as the faſhions of the times altered, he adjuſted his action and behaviour to them, and introduced every ſpecies of growing foppery.—Cibber excelled in a variety of comic characters; but his perfection of action was the coxcomb of quality, and eſpecially his Lord Foppington, in the Careleſs Huſband, which is a very fine draft of a man of good parts ſtepping beyond the bounds of ſenſe by peculiarity of exceſs in dreſs and behaviour.

In Vanbrugh's comedy of Æſop, Cibber acted the principal character with that eaſy gravity which becomes the man who inſtructs by fable.

In

In propouncing the fables of Æſop, which more reſemble the ſtyle of Fontaine than Prior's, which are profeſſedly copied from him, my friend, Mr. John Henderſon excels all men. Thoſe, who have heard him read a tale of Prior or Swift, a chapter of Triſtram Shandy, or any compoſition of the ſame ſpecies, will juſtify my opinion of his merit in fully conceiving and uttering the ſpirit of an author in the moſt familiar and agreeable manner.

At her firſt onſet, the muſe of Vanbrugh was very prolific: in the ſpace of ſix or ſeven months ſhe brought forth three comedies; the laſt was the Provoked Wife. There ſeems to have reigned in our dramatiſts of that age a ſtrong deſire to throw abuſe on the clergy: in this play, which I think is the moſt perfect of his pieces, he has introduced Sir John Brute drunk in the habit of a clergyman; his Parſon Bull, in the Relapſe, was another vile repreſentative of the ſacred order. Pope was at a loſs to gueſs at Swift's unalterable diſlike to Vanbrugh: I think the doubt is eaſily reſolved, from the poet's ridicule of churchmen.

Cibber's Sir John Brute was copied from Betterton, as far as a weak pipe and an inexpreſſive meagre countenance could bear any reſemblance to the vigorous original. I have ſeen him act this part with great and deſerved applauſe; his ſkill was ſo maſterly, that, in ſpite of natural impediments, he exhibited a faithful picture of this worſhipful debauchee. Vanburgh was, I ſuppoſe, prevailed upon by Cibber to transfer the abuſe on the clergy to a ſatirical picture of women of faſhion, in a ſcene which Cibber acted with much pleaſantry. His comic feeling when drunk, and after receiving the challenge of Conſtant, when he found him

him and Heartfree in his wife's cloſet, was inimitable acting. The audience was ſo delighted with him, that they renewed their loudeſt approbation ſeveral times.

Quin, for ſeveral years, was the Brute of Lincoln's-inn fields and other theatres. He was in general a moſt valuable performer in comedy. In Sir John Brute, he ſeemed to have forgotten that he had ever been a gentleman, of which part of the character Cibber and Garrick retained the remembrance through every ſcene of Brute's riot and debauchery. Quin, beſides, in this part, wanted variety, and that glow and warmth, in colouring the extravagances of this merry rake, without which the picture remains imperfect and unfiniſhed.

When Garrick was firſt announced for Brute, various were the opinions of the play-going people. Quin ſwore that he might poſſibly act Maſter Jacky Brute, but it was impoſſible he ſhould ever be Sir John Brute. The public almoſt unanimouſly ſet the ſtamp of approbation on his manner of repreſenting this character upon his firſt attempt. After he had fully ſatisfied his fancy, and ripened his judgment by the experience of two or three years, he was pronounced to be as perfect in this as in any of his moſt approved parts.

Though Cibber's performance in Brute was juſtly admired, thoſe, who can call to remembrance the different portraits of this riotous debauchee, as exhibited by theſe two great maſters, will, I believe, juſtify me in giving the preference, on the whole, to Mr. Garrick. The latter had, amongſt other advantages, a more expreſſive countenance, and a much happier tone of voice; his action, too, was more diverſified, and his humour leſs confined.

fined.—In the Bacchanalian ſcene, with Lord Rake and his gang, from deficiency of power and look, Cibber fell greatly ſhort of Garrick; here the latter was moſt triumphantly riotous, and kept the ſpectators in continual glee. Cibber's pale face, tame features, and weak pipe, did not preſent ſo full a contraſt to female delicacy, when in woman's apparel, as Garrick's ſtronger-marked features, manly voice, and more ſturdy action. The cap, which he ordered to be made for this ſcene, was a ſatirical ſtroke upon the vaſt quantity of gauze, ribbon, blond lace, flowers, fruit, herbage, &c. with which the ladies, about eight years ſince, uſed to adorn their heads. After enlarging ſo much on the great perfection of acting which Cibber diſplayed in the cloſet-ſcene, where Conſtant and Heartfree are diſcovered, I cannot there give the preference to Garrick, though of all the actors of drunken-ſcenes he was allowed to be the moſt natural and diverting; but impartiality requires me here to give the palm to Cibber.

In 1699, Cibber was unhappily ſeized with a paſſion for writing tragedy.—This brought forth his Xerxes; but the patentees and actors of Drury-lane rejected his tragic brat ſo abſolutely, that he was reduced to the neceſſity of applying to the company of Lincoln's-inn fields.

Betterton conſented to act this tragedy, on condition the author would pledge his credit to pay all incidental expences, in caſe of non-ſucceſs.* The action of Betterton and Mrs. Barry could not prevent the entire damnation of Xerxes.

Soon

* Life of Æſopus, annexed to the Laureat.

Soon after, the author employed his talents more happily in writing the Careleſs Huſband.—The ſucceſs of this comedy raiſed him, very deſervedly, to a high rank amongſt our dramatic writers. The plot is ſimple: the reforming a gay, thoughtleſs, libertine, into the kind and generous huſband, by opening, in their full luſtre, the amiable conduct of a patient and neglected wife; to the main plot was added, in an epiſode, a well-concerted ſcheme of pretended love, to reduce, by jealouſy, a lovely coquet to the frank acknowledgment of a real paſſion for a worthy and conſtant lover. The dialogue of the play is eaſy and natural, properly elevated to the rank of the perſonæ dramatis. The acts ſeem to be made up of nothing but chit-chat, though the characters are well diſcriminated and the plot regularly proceeds. Cibber was fond of ſcenes of reconciliation: in three or four of his comedies *, he has wrought them up with incidents ſo natural and intereſting, and in a ſtyle ſo truly affecting, that they afford perpetual ſource of pleaſure to an audience. So well did Cibber, though a profeſſed libertine through life, underſtand the dignity of virtue, that no comic author has drawn more delightful and ſtriking pictures of it. Mrs. Porter, upon reading a part, in which Cibber had painted virtue in the ſtrongeſt and moſt lively colours, aſked him how it came to paſs, that a man, who could draw ſuch admirable portraits of goodneſs, ſhould yet live as if he were a ſtranger to it?—'Madam,' ſaid Colley, 'the one is abſolutely neceſſary, the other is not.'

The

* Love's laſt Shift, Careleſs Huſband, Wife's Reſentment, Provoked Huſband.

The firſt ſhining proof of Mrs. Oldfield's merit was produced in the Careleſs Huſband; little known before, ſhe was barely ſuffered. Her Lady Betty Modiſh at once diſcovered accompliſhments to which the public were ſtrangers.

Mrs. Oldfield was, in perſon, tall, genteel, and well ſhaped; her countenance pleaſing and expreſſive, enlivened with large ſpeaking eyes, which, in ſome particular comic ſituations, ſhe kept half ſhut, eſpecially when ſhe intended to give effect to ſome brilliant or gay thought. In ſprightlineſs of air, and elegance of manner, ſhe excelled all actreſſes; and was greatly ſuperior in the clear, ſonorous, and harmonious tones of her voice.

By being a welcome and conſtant viſitor to families of diſtinction, Mrs. Oldfield acquired an elegant and graceful deportment in repreſenting women of high rank. She expreſſed the ſentiments of Lady Betty Modiſh and Lady Townly in a manner ſo eaſy, natural, and flowing, and ſo like to her common converſation, that they appeared to be her own genuine conception. She was introduced to Chriſtopher Rich by Sir John Vanbrugh. She lived ſucceſſively the friend and miſtreſs of Arthur Manwaring, Eſq; one of the moſt accompliſhed men of his age, and General Churchill.—She had a ſon by each of theſe gentlemen.—Notwithſtanding theſe connections were publicly known, ſhe was invited to the houſes of women of faſhion, as much diſtinguiſhed for unblemiſhed character as elevated rank. The royal family did not diſdain to ſee Mrs. Oldfield at their levees. George II. and Queen Caroline, when Prince and Princeſs of Wales, often condeſcended to converſe with her. One day, the princeſs told

Mrs.

Mrs. Oldfield, ſhe had heard that Gen. Churchill and ſhe were married.—'So it is ſaid, may it pleaſe your highneſs, but we have not owned it yet.'

Mrs. Oldfield, from mere motives of compaſſion, beſtowed a yearly penſion of 50l. on the unfortunate Savage, which he enjoyed to her death. Dr. Johnſon ſeems to approve Savage's not celebrating the memory of his benefactreſs in a poem. But, ſurely, he might have written verſes on his patroneſs without offence to decency or morality. Mrs. Oldfield was generous and humane, witty, well bred, and univerſally admired and beloved. In variety of profeſſional merit, ſhe excelled all the actreſſes of her time. Theſe are topics Mr. Savage might have inſiſted upon without wounding his piety.

Pope, who ſeems to have perſecuted the name of player with a malignancy unworthy of genius, in his Art of Sinking in Poetry, ſtigmatized her converſation by the word *Oldfieldiſmos*, which he printed in Greek characters. There cannot be a doubt that he meant Mrs. Oldfield by the dying coquet, in his Epiſtle on the Characters of Men:

Odious! in woollen! 'twould a ſaint provoke!—
Were the laſt words which poor Narciſſa ſpoke.—
No! let a charming chintz and Bruſſels lace
Wrap my cold limbs and ſhade my lifeleſs face.
One would not, ſure, be frightful when one's dead;
And, Betty, give this cheek a little red.

The Betty here mentioned is ſuppoſed to have been Mrs. Saunders, Mrs. Oldfield's friend and confidante, a very good actreſs in parts of decayed widows, nurſes, and old maids. She retired from the ſtage in 1725; and played, about nine years

years after, the part of Lady Wiſhfor't, in the Way of the World, for the benefit of Mrs. Younger, ſoon after, by marriage, the honourable Mrs. Finch. Mrs. Oldfield had, for a long time, conceived a diſlike to acting parts in tragedy; but the conſtant applauſe, which followed her tragic repreſentation, reconciled her to Melpomene. Her laſt new part, in tragedy, was Thomſon's Sophoniſba. The author beſtows, in his ſhort advertiſement to the play, a very high encomium on her action and deportment in that noble character. In reply to ſome degrading expreſſion of Maſſiniſſa, relating to Carthage, ſhe uttered the following line,

Not one baſe word of Carthage, for thy ſoul!——

with ſuch grandeur in her action, a look ſo tremendous, and in a voice ſo powerful, that it is ſaid ſhe even aſtoniſhed Wilks, her Maſſiniſſa; it is certain the audience were ſtruck, and expreſſed their feelings by the moſt uncommon applauſe. To gain a more complete knowledge of this actreſs's diſtinguiſhed faculties of pleaſing, the reader muſt peruſe the latter end of Cibber's preface to his Provoked Huſband. In all the tumults and diſturbances of the theatre on the firſt night of a new play, which was formerly a time of more dangerous ſervice, to the actors, than it has been of late, Mrs. Oldfield was entirely miſtreſs of herſelf; ſhe thought it her duty, amidſt the moſt violent oppoſition and uproar, to exert the utmoſt of her abilities to ſerve the author. In the comedy of the Provoked Huſband, Cibber's enemies tried all their power to get the play condemned. The reconciliation-ſcene wrought ſo effectually upon

upon the ſenſible and generous part of the audience, that the concluſion was greatly and generouſly approved. Amidſt a thouſand applauſes, Mrs. Oldfield came forward to ſpeak the epilogue; but when ſhe had pronounced the firſt line,——

Methinks I hear ſome powder'd critic ſay——

a man, of no diſtinguiſhed appearance, from the ſeat next to the orcheſtra, ſaluted her with a hiſs. She fixed her eye upon him immediately, made a very ſhort pauſe, and ſpoke the words *poor creature!* loud enough to be heard by the audience, with ſuch a look of mingled ſcorn, pity, and contempt, that the moſt uncommon applauſe juſtified her conduct in this particular, and the poor reptile ſunk down with fear and trembling.

Lady Townly has been univerſally ſaid to be her *ne plus ultra* in acting. She ſlided ſo gracefully into the foibles, and diſplayed ſo humorouſly the exceſſes of a fine woman, too ſenſible of her charms, too confident of her power, and led away by her paſſion for pleaſure, that no ſucceeding Lady Townly arrived at her many diſtinguiſhed excellences in that character. Mrs. Heron, her ſucceſſor, and the beautiful Mrs. Woffington, came neareſt to her.

Cibber has, in his preface to this play, very juſtly commended Wilks for his manly aſſumed ſpirit in Lord Townly.——Wilks was ſo much the real fine gentleman, that, in the ſcene where he was reduced to the neceſſity of reproaching Lady Townly with her faults, in his warmeſt anger he mixed ſuch tenderneſs as was ſoftened into

into tears. The part has not been equally ſupported by any actor ſince.

Mr. Garrick, in Lord Townly, ſeemed ever to be under reſtraint. He kept back his natural impetuoſity ſo much, that he loſt the ſpirit of the Provoked Huſband.

During the embrace of reconciliation, in ſpeaking theſe words,—'But from a ſhipwreck ſaved, we mingle tears with our embraces,'—Barry, in happily mixing the various paſſions which ariſe in the breaſt of a good man and reconciled huſband, exceeded all conception.

Sir Francis Wronghead has been well acted by ſeveral comedians, and eſpecially by Macklin and Yates; that they did not reach the finiſh of the author may be excuſed.

Cibber had two paſſions, which conſtantly expoſed him to ſevere cenſure, and ſometimes the higheſt ridicule: his writing tragedy and acting tragic characters. In both he perſiſted to the laſt: for, after he had left the ſtage many years, he acted Richard III. and very late in life produced his Papal Tyranny. Of his Cardinal Wolſey I have ſpoken largely in my remarks on Henry VIII. Iago he acted in a ſtyle ſo drawling and hypocritical, and wore the maſk of honeſty ſo looſely, that Othello who is not drawn a fool, muſt have ſeen the villain through his thin diſguiſes. The truth is, Cibber was endured, in this and other tragic parts on account of his general merit in comedy. During this century, the public had not ſeen a proper outline of Iago till Charles Macklin exhibited a faithful picture of this arch-villain, 1744, in the Haymarket-theatre, when Foote was his Othello. It is to Macklin we chiefly owe the many admirable

ble ſtrokes of paſſion with which Barry ſurpriſed us in Othello. Let not this be underſtood to mean the leaſt degradation of that great actor's abilities; for, if Barry had not poſſeſſed a ſoul capable of receiving the inſtructions of ſo great a maſter, he could not have ſo pathetically affected an audience. Macklin himſelf will honeſtly tell us, that he owed no ſmall part of his knowledge in acting to the leſſons he gained from Mr. Chetwood, prompter of Drury-lane theatre.

Cibber perſiſted ſo obſtinately in acting parts in tragedy, that at laſt the public grew out of patience, and fairly hiſſed him off the ſtage. The following anecdote was many years ſince authenticated to me.

When Thomſon's Sophoniſba was read to the actors, Cibber laid his hand upon Scipio, a character, which, though it appears only in the laſt act, is of great dignity and importance. For two nights ſucceſſively, Cibber was as much exploded as any bad actor could be. Williams, by deſire of Wilks, made himſelf maſter of the part; but he, marching ſlowly, in great military diſtinction, from the upper part of the ſtage, and wearing the ſame dreſs as Cibber, was miſtaken for him, and met with repeated hiſſes joined to the muſic of catcals; but, as ſoon as the audience were undeceived, they converted their groans and hiſſes to loud and long-continued applauſe.

To aim at general excellence is highly commendable; but to perſiſt in oppoſition to the repeated reproofs of the public, is bidding defiance to the general ſenſe.

As a manager, to whom was entruſted the inſpection of new plays, operas, and farces, and of receiving the applications of all dramatic writers,

Cibber's

Cibber's character does not appear very juſtifiable. In the Memoirs of Mr. Garrick, I related the ſtory of his inſolent behaviour to Mr. Fenton, the author of Mariamne, who perhaps fared the worſe with him from his being known to be the intimate friend of Mr. Pope. Various complaints were continually circulated, in the prints, of his pride and impertinence to authors, eſpecially to the youngeſt of them, whom he termed *ſinging-birds*, which he was fond of choking. His callous temper rendered all attacks from the preſs ineffectual. One ſtory of his unreſtrained inſolence is worth relating, becauſe it ſeems, for once, he was mortified with the chaſtiſement which attended his behaviour.

A certain young gentleman applied to Cibber to look over a new dramatic piece. He knocked at his door, and gave into his hands a roll of paper, as he ſtood on the threſhold, the door being but half opened; he deſired he would read it, and give him his opinion of it. Cibber turned over the firſt leaf; and, reading only two lines, returned it with theſe words, 'Sir, it will not do.' The mortified author left him; and Cibber, full of the adventure, went to Button's coffee-houſe, and, ready to ſplit with laughter, related the ſtory to Colonel Brett; but he, far from applauding ſuch conduct, put on a ſevere brow, and treated him with very ſharp language. He told him, if the gentleman had reſented this vile uſage in any manner, he would have been juſtified.—'Do you pretend, ſir, by reading two lines, and that in a ridiculous curſory manner, to judge of the merit of a whole play?'—Much more, to the ſame purpoſe, the colonel added, and, when he had done, left the room. Cibber made no reply: he ſquinted,

as

as uſual; took a pinch of ſnuff; and ſat down to ruminate on the affair, under the pretence of reading a Spectator.*

But Cibber was not only accuſed of treating authors with ſupercilioufneſs, but with purloining from works which were left in his hands, and which he detained in order to make advantage of them. The author of the Laureat particularly mentions his diſcouraging a lady who brought him a play, in which a gallant gentleman courts two women at once: this he called an incident entirely improbable. The ſame author accuſes him of afterwards engrafting this very character in one of his own comedies, under the name of Atall.† At this diſtance of time, the evidence of Cibber's thefts, if any ſuch were committed by him, being removed, nothing poſitive can be pronounced concerning them.

The author of the Laureat's deſcription, in what manner this manager and his brothers treated authors, will give a ſtrong picture of overbearing inſolence on one ſide, and of tame ſubmiſſion on the other.

'The court ſitting,' ſays this writer, 'Chancellor Cibber, (for the other two, like maſters in chancery, ſat only for form-ſake, did not preſume to judge) nodded to the author to open his manuſcript. The author begins to read; in which if he failed to pleaſe the corrector, he would ſometimes condeſcend to read it for him. If the play ſtruck him very warmly, as it would if he found any thing new in it, and he thought he could par-

 ticularly

* Laureat, p. 67. † Ibidem.

ticularly ſhine as an actor, he would then lay down his pipe, (for the chancellor always ſmoked when he made a decree,) and cry, "By G——, there is ſomething in this! I do not know but it may do; I will play ſuch a part." When the reading was finiſhed, he made his proper corrections, and ſometimes without any propriety."*

That Wilks, who was without a learned education, though a man of plain good ſenſe, ſhould ſubmit to the ſupreme direction of Cibber, reſpecting new pieces, is not ſurpriſing; but that Booth, a ſcholar, and a better judge, of tragedy at leaſt, than Cibber, ſhould reſign his underſtanding to an inferior, muſt be reſolved into the great love of eaſe which accompanied him through life. Of Booth's conduct, as a manager, we have not the leaſt or moſt diſtant hint of complaint in Cibber's Apology, but the author is extremely querulous with reſpect to Dogget's and Wilks's behaviour. The former was certainly, in the opinion of the world as well as Cibber, an original and inimitable actor; a cloſe copier of nature in all her attitudes and diſguiſes; a man, ſo ſenſible of what his own natural abilities could poſſibly attain to, that he never ventured upon any part that he was not ſure he could properly repreſent. Of this integrity to himſelf Cibber produces a remarkable inſtance. On his return to Drury-lane, in 1697, Vanbrugh caſt him into the part of Lory, in the Relapſe: after a trial, in which he found his deficiency, he gave it up to Pinkethman. Cibber ſays, in dreſſing a character to the greateſt exactneſs, Dogget was remarkably ſkilful; the leaſt article, of whatever habit he wore, ſeemed, in ſome degree, to ſpeak and mark the

* Laureat, p. 67.

the different humour he repreſented. This, ſays the writer of a General View of the Stage *, I have heard from one who performed with Dogget; and that he could, with great exactneſs, paint his face ſo as to repreſent the age of ſeventy, eighty, and ninety, diſtinctly; which occaſioned Sir Godfrey Kneller to tell him one day, at Button's, that he excelled him in painting; for that he could only copy nature from the originals before him, but that Dogget could vary them at pleaſure, and yet keep a cloſe likeneſs. In the part of Money-trap, in the Confederacy, he wore an old thread-bare black coat, to which he had put new cuffs, pocket-lids, and buttons, on purpoſe to make its ruſtineſs more conſpicuous; the neck was ſtuffed ſo as to make him appear round-ſhouldered and give his head the greater prominency; his ſquare-toed ſhoes were large enough to buckle over thoſe he wore in common, which made his legs appear much ſmaller than uſual.--This great actor was perhaps the only one who confined himſelf to ſuch characters as nature ſeemed to have made him for. No temptation could allure him to ſtep out of his own circle; from this circumſtance, he never appeared to the audience with any diminution of his general excellence. In his temper, he was as true a humouriſt as Moroſe in the Silent Woman.—Liberty he liked, for he was a ſtaunch whig, but not on the generous principles eſtabliſhed at the Revolution; his love of freedom extended little farther than the gratification of his own inclinations. Money he loved; but even that he would reject, if his own method of obtaining it was by any means diſturbed; witneſs his reſigning a large

* Written by Mr. T. Wilks, and publiſhed for J. Coote, in 1759.

income, becauſe the crown, through the intereſt of Lord Bolingbroke, interfered in favour of Booth. Dogget never interpoſed, in the management of the theatre, except to adjuſt his own parts in plays, and to take his ſhare of the profits at the treaſury. No ſtock-broker was buſier at the Exchange, to take advantage of the riſe and fall of ſtocks, than Dogget. Cibber was as intent upon gaming, and all manner of pleaſure, as Dogget could be in trafficking with the funds. Cibber has loſt every ſhilling at hazard or cards, and has been heard to cry out, 'Now I muſt go home and eat a child!' This attention to the gaming-table would not, we may be aſſured, render him fitter for his buſineſs of the ſtage. After many an unlucky run, at Tom's coffee-houſe *, he has arrived at the playhouſe in great tranquillity, and then, humming over an opera-tune, he has walked on the ſtage very imperfect in the part he was to act. Cibber ſhould not have reprehended Powell ſo ſeverely for neglect and imperfect repreſentation: I have ſeen him at fault where it was leaſt expected, in parts which he had acted a hundred times, and particularly in Sir Courtly Nice; but Colley dexterouſly ſupplied the deficiency of his memory by prolonging his ceremonious bow to the lady, and drawling out 'Your humble ſervant, madam,' to an extraordinary length; then, taking a pinch of ſnuff, and ſtrutting deliberately acroſs the ſtage, he has gravely aſked the prompter, What is next?

Wilks was, by nature and education, differently formed: with the warm and generous ſpirit which becomes a man, he had, from practice and experience,

* In Ruſſell-ſtreet.

rience, under the tuition of Mr. Aſhbury, (a very good actor of the Bettertonian ſchool, and many years the manager of Dublin theatre,) acquired a love for order, decency, and ſtrict regularity, in the buſineſs of the ſcene.—It is aſſerted, by the writer of the Laureat, that, when truſted with the management of the ſtage by Chriſtopher Rich, he found ſuch confuſion, and contempt of all diſcipline, in the company, that he was reduced to the neceſſity of challenging and fighting ſeveral amongſt the ring-leaders of theſe diſorders.—— Powell, ſays Cibber, declined a duel with Wilks, when he found his antagoniſt would fight. Pity! that a man, poſſeſſed of ſuch great talents for acting as Powell, ſhould have rendered them all ineffectual by his perſiſting in irregularity and intemperance. In looking over the advertiſement of plays, in the firſt edition of the Spectator, publiſhed in 1711 and 1712, the name of Powell I ſee placed to many very important characters, under the management of Cibber, Dogget, and Wilks: to Falſtaff, to Lear, Leon, Cortez, in the Indian Emperor, and many others. Even Wilks would not be ſo partial, during Powell's ability to act, as to give theſe important parts to his friend Mills. Addiſon and Steele continued their regard and countenance, as long as they could be of ſervice to this unhappy man. That he acted Portius, in Cato, 1713, muſt have been with the author's approbation; and this, I believe, was Powell's laſt part, in a new play, of any conſequence. He was ſo hunted, by the ſheriffs officers, for debt, that he uſually walked the ſtreets with his ſword in his hand (ſheathed,) in terrorem to his purſuers. If he ſaw any of them at a diſtance, he would roar out, 'Get on the other

other ſide of the way, you dog!' and the bailiff, who knew his old cuſtomer, would moſt obligingly anſwer, 'We do not want you *now*, Maſter Powell.' He was alive in the year 1717; I ſaw, many years ſince, a play-bill, for his benefit, dated that year. The unhappy George Powell, whoſe fault was too great a paſſion for ſocial pleaſure, was certainly an actor of genius; but, in his moral conduct, he was, amongſt the players, what Edmund Smith, the author of Phædra and Hippolitus, was amongſt the poets: not all the care and caution of Smith's Oxford-friends, and his polite acquaintance at London, could keep him either decent in dreſs or regular in behaviour.

To return to Wilks. What could this man, of ſobriety and habitual regularity, do with ſuch partners as a gameſter and a hunter after the ſtocks? Cibber and Dogget wanted not abilities to go through the various buſineſs of the theatre; but their inclinations carried them to their two dear Dulcineas, pleaſure and profit.

Cibber draws an advantageous character of Dogget, as a man of ſenſe and one that underſtood buſineſs; but, ſurely, his giving up near 800l. or 1000l. per annum, on another man's being advanced to an equal degree of happineſs with himſelf, or from a paltry grudge or pique to a worthy man who ſometimes thwarted his pride, gives no good proof of the ſoundneſs of his intellects. The great complaint of Cibber and Dogget, againſt their partner, Wilks, was his impetuous and overbearing temper. On that account, and that only, Dogget told Cibber, ſays the latter, he gave up his income; and, for that cauſe, the ſame informer

former aſſures us, ſeveral actors of Drury-lane theatre forſook their old maſters, and liſted with John Rich at Lincoln's-inn fields. I ſhall not take the evidence of two ſuch partial and intereſted men againſt ſo honeſt and ſteady a character, in the maintenance of every thing that was decent, juſt, and generous, as that of Robert Wilks. Dogget ſacrificed to his own humour when he reſigned his ſhare of the licence or patent. When Quin, Walker, and Ryan, left Drury-lane theatre, it was not from a diſlike to Wilks, but from an offer of advanced ſalary, with the poſſeſſion of the capital parts. Ryan choſe 5l. per week, at Lincoln's-inn fields, with the part of Hamlet, in preference to Laertes, in the ſame play, and 50s. at Drury-lane; and Quin preferred the acceptance of the ſame, or a larger, ſalary, offered from Rich, with Tamerlane and Brutus in Julius Cæſar, inſtead of inferior parts in the ſame plays with what he thought a ſmall pittance. The mean ſubterfuge of Cibber, to cloke his ſpleen to Wilks by the ſuffrage of others, is viſible. But this good man gave Dogget and Cibber ſtill farther provocations. In the decorations of plays, they grudged, from mean œconomy, every neceſſary expence, while his ſpirit took pleaſure in dreſſing every character as it ought to be, and furniſhing ſuch other theatric ornaments as the dramatic piece required.

Of the managers, Booth, Wilks, and Cibber, the laſt, for many reaſons, was the leaſt eſteemed by the players. He ſpared no pains, it is true, to inſtruct the actors in ſuch characters as he drew in his own pieces; but he could not forbear, at times, wantonly throwing out ſarcaſms on the inferior

inferior performers *. Cibber was certainly leaſt eſteemed of the three great maſters; the Laureat goes farther, and avers that he was abſolutely odious to the comedians. I will not go ſo far; but I have been told, that the players had no hold on any of his paſſions, to accompliſh their views, except his timidity. Victor informed me, that Bickerſtaffe, a comedian, whoſe benefit-play Steele good-naturedly recommends to the public, in the Tatler, on account of his being, as he ſays, his relation, had acquired an income of 4l. per week. Cibber, in an œconomical fit, retrenched him of half. The man, who had a family, was ſtruck at the ſudden diminution of his allowance; and, knowing whence his misfortune was derived, waited on Cibber, and flatly told him, that, as he could not ſubſiſt on the ſmall ſum to which he had reduced his ſalary, he muſt call the author of his diſtreſs to an account, for that it would be eaſier to him to loſe his life than to ſtarve. The affrighted Cibber told him, he ſhould receive an anſwer from him on Saturday next. Bickerſtaffe found, that day, his uſual income was continued.

However Cibber might be diſliked by the players, it is certain that Wilks was eſteemed and reſpected by them. Booth was valued and beloved as their companion, who mixed in their ſociety and took part in their intereſts. When Harper remon-

* When the younger Mills was once rehearſing Scandal, in Love for Love, a part which Booth had formerly acted, Mills, in that part of the play where Scandal breaks out into the exclamation of 'Death and hell! where is Valentine?' obſerved, that poor Mr. Booth forgot the 'Death and hell, &c.' Cibber, with a contemptuous ſmile, told him, there was more beauty in his forgetfulneſs than in all he remembered.

remonſtrated to him, that Shepherd's income was larger than his by 20s. per week, though he preſumed, he ſaid, that his own induſtry and variety of buſineſs were not inferior to Shepherd's; Booth ſaid in reply, aſſenting to the truth of what he had affirmed, 'Suppoſe, now, Harper, we ſhould make you both equal by reducing his ſalary to yours?—'By no means,' ſaid the other; 'I would not injure Mr. Shepherd for the world; I would only, by your favour, ſir, honeſtly ſerve myſelf.'—The manager ſaid no more; on pay-day, Harper found his weekly allowance increaſed by an addition of twenty ſhillings. However trifling theſe little ſtories may ſeem, they throw more light on a diſtinguiſhed character than matters of ſeemingly more importance. The truth is, the love and eſteem of the actors went along with Booth and Wilks; to Cibber they paid no farther regard than what his power and their fear inſpired.

There is a little open room, in Drury-lane theatre, called the ſettle; it is ſeparated from the ſtage and the ſcene-room by a wainſcot incloſure. It was formerly, before the great green room was built, a place for many of the actors to retire to, between the acts, during the time of action and rehearſal. From time out of mind, till about the year 1740, to this place a pretty large number of the comedians uſed to reſort conſtantly after dinner, which, at that time, was generally over at two o'clock. Here they talked over the news and politics of the day, though, indeed, they were no great politicians; for players are generally king's men. Here they cracked their jokes, indulged in little ſallies of pleaſantry, and laughed, in good humour, at their mutual follies and adventures.—Kings, footmen, aldermen, cardinals, coblers,

princes, judges, link-boys, and fine gentlemen, in ſhort all characters, were mingled together; and, from this chaos of confuſion, aroſe a harmony of mirth, which contributed not a little to reconcile them to their various ſituations in the theatre.—Wilks came amongſt them ſometimes; Booth, who loved the bagatelle, oftener: he liked to converſe with them freely, and hear their jokes and remarks on each other; and if, from any accidental ſtory or information, theſe good men, I mean Wilks and Booth, could make any individual happy, they laid hold of the offered opportunity. Cibber ſeldom came among the *ſettlers*; tyrants fear, as they know they are feared.

Cibber, with propriety enough, perhaps, confines his narrative to thoſe actors who were dead. But how came he to forget Dicky Norris and Bullock, men of acknowledged merit, who had been numbered with the dead ſeveral years before he publiſhed his Apology? Norris was ſo much a favourite of the public, ever ſince he had acted the part of Jubilee Dicky, in the Trip to the Jubilee, that the name of Dicky was often annexed, in the play-houſe bills, to any character he acted. In the firſt edition of the Spectator, in the advertiſement of the Beaux Stratagem, he is called Dicky Scrub. He was, in ſize, low and little, but not ill made, with an expreſſive, truly-comic countenance, and a ſhrill, clear, and audible, voice. Mrs. Oldfield thought him an excellent figure for a cuckold. When, upon the indiſpoſition of Norris, Cibber undertook to play Barnaby Brittle, in the Wanton Wife, his action was generally applauded; but when Cibber ſaid to Oldfield, 'Nanny, how do you like your new huſband?' ſhe replied, 'Why, very well, but

not

not half ſo well as Dicky Norris?'——'How ſo?'——'Why, you are too important in your figure for one of the horned race; but Norris has ſuch a diminutive form, and ſo ſneaking a look, that he ſeems formed on purpoſe for horns, and I make him a cuckold always with a hearty good will*.'

In his laſt illneſs, he was attended by an eminent phyſician, who gave him hopes of recovery. 'Doctor,' ſaid the ſick man, 'when the wheels of a watch are quite decayed, do you think they can be repaired?——'No, by no art in the world.'——'Then, ſir,' ſays Norris, 'it is the ſame caſe with me; all the wheels of my machine are abſolutely, through time, quite worn out, and nothing can reſtore them to their accuſtomed force.'——Norris died about the year 1725.

Bullock was an actor of great glee and much comic vivacity. He was, in his perſon, large; with a lively countenance, full of humorous information. Steele, in the Tatler, ſpeaks, with his uſual kind ſenſibility, of Norris, Bullock, and Pinkethman, and their powers of raiſing mirth.—The hiſtorian of the two ſtages ſays, that Bullock 'is not only the beſt of actors, but ſo modeſt, that he is inſenſible of his own merit.' The comic ability of Bullock was confirmed to me by Mr. Macklin, who aſſured me, very lately, that he was, in his department, a true genius of the ſtage. I have ſeen him act ſeveral parts with great applauſe; eſpecially the Spaniſh Friar, at a time when he was above eighty.

Cibber, agreeably to his adopted plan of confining his narrative to deceaſed actors, ſpoke only in

*Chetwood, &c.

in general terms of Mrs. Porter's merit in tragedy; but, although this volume is enlarged to a much greater bulk than I intended, I cannot omit ſome well-authenticated anecdotes relating to this moſt valuable and reſpected actreſs; who was not only an ornament of the ſtage, but of human nature.

She was firſt taken notice of by Betterton; who ſaw her act, when a child, the Genius of Britain, in a Lord Mayor's Pageant, in the reign of Charles or James II. Mrs. Porter always ſpoke of Betterton with great reſpect and veneration.—She was ſo little, when firſt under his tuition, that he threatened her, if ſhe did not ſpeak and act as he would have her, to put her into a fruit-woman's baſket and cover her with a vine-leaf. It was the cuſtom of the fruit-women, formerly, to ſtand fronting the pit, with their backs to the ſtage; and their oranges, and other fruit, covered with vine-leaves.

Mrs. Porter was ever welcome to the beſt and moſt reſpectable families in London. Oldfield and this actreſs roſe gradually to excellence and fame much about the ſame time. They converſed together on the beſt terms; Porter's gravity was a contraſt to the ſprightlineſs of Oldfield, who would often, in jeſt, call her her mother.

She lived at Heywood-hill, near Hendon. After the play, ſhe went home in a one-horſe chaiſe; her conſtant companions were a book and a brace of horſe-piſtols. The diſlocation of her thigh-bone was attended with a circumſtance that deſerves to be recorded. In the ſummer of 1731, as ſhe was taking the air in her one-horſe chaiſe, ſhe was ſtopped by a highwayman, who demanded her money. She had the courage to preſent one

of

of her piſtols to him; the man, who perhaps had only with him the appearance of fire-arms, aſſured her that he was no common thief; that robbing on the highway was not to him a matter of choice, but neceſſity, and in order to relieve the wants of his poor diſtreſſed family. He informed her, at the ſame time, where he lived; and told her ſuch a melancholy ſtory, that ſhe gave him all the money in her purſe, which was about ten guineas. The man left her: upon this ſhe gave a laſh to the horſe; he ſuddenly ſtarted out of the track, and the chaiſe was overthrown; this occaſioned the diſlocation of her thigh-bone. Let it be remembered, to her honour, that notwithſtanding this unlucky and painful accident, ſhe made ſtrict enquiry after the robber; and, finding that he had not deceived her, ſhe raiſed, amongſt her acquaintance, about ſixty pounds, which ſhe took care to ſend him. Such an action, in a perſon of high rank, would have been celebrated as ſomething great and heroic: the feeling mind will make no diſtinction between the generoſity of an actreſs and that of a princeſs.

I have already obſerved, that ſhe was eſteemed the genuine ſucceſſor of Mrs. Barry, whoſe theatrical page ſhe had been when very young.

When the ſcene was not agitated with paſſion, to the general ſpectator ſhe did not give equal pleaſure; her recitation of fact or ſentiment was ſo modulated, as to reſemble muſical cadence rather than ſpeaking, and this rendered her acting in comedy ſomewhat cold and ineffectual.—— Where the paſſions predominated, ſhe exerted her powers to a ſupreme degree; ſhe ſeemed then to be another perſon, and to be informed with that noble

noble and enthuſiaſtic ardour which was capable of rouſing the coldeſt auditor to an equal animation. Her deportment was dignified with graceful eaſe, and her action the reſult of the paſſion ſhe felt.

After the misfortune of her diſlocated limb, and in a very advanced age, I ſaw her act many of her principal characters with much vigour and great applauſe, and, in particular, Clytemneſtra in Thomſon's Agamemnon *. In drawing this character, the author has varied from the idea of Æſchylus; and, I think with great propriety, he has followed the original drawing of Homer, who gives ſome ſtrokes of tenderneſs to this princeſs, and makes her yield with reluctance to the perſuaſions of Ægiſthus; who could not entirely ſubdue her affection to her huſband, till he had removed the faithful bard, placed about her by Agamemnon as her counſellor and adviſer.

In this tragedy, Mrs. Porter gave a ſtriking proof of her great power in expreſſing the paſſions.—Her action and deportment, through the part of Clytemneſtra, marked the conſummate actreſs. In the ſecond act, when, in the diſtreſs of her mind from conſcious guilt, ſhe is torn with conflicting paſſions at the approach of her injured huſband, her action and expreſſion, when ſhe ſaid to her attendant——

Bring me my children hither; they may perhaps relieve me——

ſhe

* Thomſon, in reading his play of Agamemnon to the actors, in the green-room, pronounced every line in ſuch a broad Scotch accent, that they could not reſtrain themſelves from a loud laugh. Upon this, the author good-naturedly ſaid to the manager, 'Do you, ſir, take my play, and go on with it; for, though I can write a tragedy, I find I cannot read one.

ſhe ſtruck the audience with aſtoniſhment, who expreſſed the higheſt approbation by loud and reiterated applauſes.

In her perſon ſhe was tall and well-ſhaped; of a fair complexion, but not handſome; her voice was harſh and unpleaſing. She elevated herſelf above all perſonal defects by her exquiſite judgment. Though ſhe greatly admired Betterton, and had ſeen all the old actors of merit, ſhe was much charmed with Mr. Garrick, and lamented her want of youth and vigour to exert her ſkill with ſo great a genius.

Mrs. Porter outlived her annuity; and, in a very advanced age, was principally ſupported by a very worthy nobleman *, who made her a preſent of a new comedy, and permitted her to publiſh it, for her benefit, by ſubſcription. She died about the year 1762. When Dr. Johnſon, ſome years before her death, paid her a viſit, ſhe appeared to him ſo wrinkled, that, he ſaid, a picture of old age in the abſtract might be taken from her countenance. Mrs. Porter lived for ſome time with Mrs. Cotterell, relict of Colonel Cotterell, and Mrs. Lewis, who, I believe, now reſides in the Circus at Bath *.

To return to Cibber. Envy is, I fear, annexed ſo cloſely to mankind in general, and more eſpecially to the condition of a player, from his circumſcribed ſituation, that we are not to wonder

* Lord Cornbury.

† The anecdotes, relating to Mrs. Porter, were communicated to me by an elderly gentlewoman, lately dead, an acquaintance of Dr. Johnſon, who often viſited her; by one, who was a frequenter of the theatres for near ſixty years; and others.

der that he had his ſhare of it.—He never heartily joined the public voice in the approbation of Mr. Garrick; he ſhrunk from it as if he was hurt by it.

Mr. Garrick aſked him if he had not, in his poſſeſſion, a comedy or two of his own writing.—'What then?' ſaid Cibber.——'I ſhould be glad to have the honour of bringing it into the world.'——'Who have you to act it?'——'Why, there are (ſaid Garrick) Clive and Pritchard, myſelf, and ſome others,' whom he named.——'No!' ſaid the old man, taking a pinch of ſnuff with great nonchalance, 'it won't do.'—Foote often declared, that Cibber would allow no higher merit to Garrick than his acting Fribble. At a meeting of Cibber, Garrick, Foote, and others, at Sir F. Blake Delaval's, Garrick imprudently drew on himſelf a rebuke from Cibber. The converſation happened to turn upon old actors, and their peculiar manner of playing. Mr. Garrick obſerved, that the old ſtyle in acting was baniſhed the ſtage, and would not now go down.——'How do you know?' ſaid Cibber; 'you never tried it.'

He either did not ſee, or would not acknowledge he ſaw, the merit of Elrington, an actor approved by the beſt judges in England and Ireland. Elrington, when a young man, wiſhed to act the part of Torriſmond, in the Spaniſh Frier; this requeſt Cibber oppoſed with all his might. A nobleman of great eminence ſent for him, and deſired he would give his reaſons for not permitting the young player to try his abilities in a favourite part. 'My lord,' ſaid Cibber, 'it is not with us as with you; your lordſhip is ſenſible, that there is no difficulty in filling places at court;

court; you cannot be at a loss for persons to act their parts there. But I assure you it is quite otherwise in our theatrical world; if we should invest people with characters who are incapable to support them we should be undone.'

But Cibber was sufficiently mortified afterwards for his behaviour to Elrington; who, during the indisposition of Booth, in the year 1729, was the great support of Drury-lane. The managers were so well convinced of his importance to them, that they offered him his own conditions if he would engage with them for a term of years. Elrington, with great modesty, replied: 'I am truly sensible of the value of your offer; but in Ireland I am so well rewarded for my services, that I cannot think of leaving it on any consideration.—— There is not,' added he, 'a gentleman's house in that kingdom to which I am not a welcome visitor.' Elrington died at Dublin, greatly lamented, July 22, 1732.

To conclude. As a writer of comedies, Cibber must be placed in a very superior rank; before Jeremy Collier attacked the profaneness of dramatic writers, he first taught the stage to talk decently and morally. He was properly the inventor of the higher comedy, a species of the drama in which persons of high birth and eminent rank are introduced; for the faint efforts, in that style, of Etheridge and Steele, in Sir Fopling Flutter and the Funeral, are scarcely worthy our notice. As a manager of a theatre, his behaviour to authors I have proved to have been illiberal and insolent; his treatment of the actors has been generally condemned as unfriendly, if not tyrannical. As a member of society at large, little can be said in his praise.——Soon after he

had

had ſold his ſhare in the patent, for a very large ſum, to Mr. Highmore, he applied to the Duke of Grafton for a patent, in favour of his ſon Theophilus, becauſe Highmore would not comply with the young man's demands. The duke ſaw through the injuſtice of the act, and peremptorily refuſed to gratify the unreaſonable requeſt of his old acquaintance, Colley.——Victor, from whom I received my information, very honeſtly oppoſed this unjuſt behaviour of his old friend, Cibber; who, after having parted with his ſhare in the old patent for more than its value, would have rendered it worthleſs by a new one.

His love of gaming rendered him a neglectful father, and unkind to his family and relations.—The moral honeſty of a gameſter, depending ſo much upon the revolutions of chance, cannot ſafely be relied on.

It muſt be granted, that, although Cibber was a gameſter, he was not ever charged with being a cheat, or gambler. A dupe to his own paſſions he certainly was, and probably to the fraudulent practices of others; but he never merited the odious nick-name of a black-leg.

His contempt of religion was juſtly cenſured by many. Dennis, in a letter to Sir John Edgar, alias Sir Richard Steele, charges him with ſpitting at a picture of our Saviour at Bath. At Tunbridge, I have been informed by Dr. Johnſon, Cibber entered into a converſation with the famous Mr. William Whiſton, with a view to inſult him; but Whiſton cut him ſhort, by telling him, at once, that he could poſſibly hold no diſcourſe with him; for that he was himſelf a clergyman; and Cibber was a player, and was beſides, as he had heard, a pimp.

Cibber

Cibber muſt have raiſed conſiderable contributions on the public by his works. To ſay nothing of the ſums accumulated by dedications,* benefits, and the ſale of his plays ſingly, his dramatic works, in quarto, by ſubſcription, publiſhed 1721, produced him a conſiderable ſum of money. It is computed that he gained, by the excellent Apology for his life, no leſs than the ſum of 1500l.

Pope's mercileſs treatment of Cibber was originally owing to the latter's attack, upon the farce of Three Hours after Marriage, in the character of Bayes in the Rehearſal; and, though it is evident Pope ſeverely felt the ridicule of the narrative in Cibber's Firſt Epiſtle, the reader of his Second Letter will be convinced, that the laureat, notwithſtanding his affectation of indifference did not reliſh the being tranſmitted to poſterity with Pope's indelible marks of infamy upon him.

Though the ſuperior ſpirit of Swift controuled the actions and regulated the politics of Pope, the latter had no influence of that kind upon the dean. He was not induced, by his friend's diſlike to Cibber, to attack him in any part of his writings, except, I believe, in a ſhort ridicule on his birth-day odes. As ſoon as Cibber's Apology reached Dublin, Faulkner, the Printer, ſent it to the Dean of St. Patrick's, who told him, next day, that Cibber's book had captivated him; he ſat up all night to read it through. When Faulkner gave information of this to Cibber, he ſhed tears for joy.

Cibber died in the eighty-ſeventh year of his age, 1758. The money he had ſaved, in the latter part of his life, he left, with great propriety, to

* King George I. gave him a hundred pounds for his dedication of the Nonjuror.

to his grand children.—In perſon, he was of the middle ſize; and, though ſtrait, not well-ſhaped. I have ſeen a mezzotinto of him, from a painting of Signor Amiconi, in the character of Lord Foppington, very like him.

I muſt not forget to relate, that the comedy of the Non-juror, written by Cibber, and acted in 1717, expoſed the author to innumerable and virulent attacks from the high tory and Jacobite parties. The generous principles of free government, eſtabliſhed at the coronation of King William and Queen Mary, had not, at that time, taken ſuch deep root as they have ſince done. Many people then ſurvived, who had been attached from education, and ſome perhaps from principle, to the exiled family. Prejudices imbibed in the early part of life, are not eaſily ſubdued; but, beſides thoſe who acted on theſe motives, there were many who were influenced from meaner inducements. Cibber's play was written with a view to juſtify the doctrines inculcated by the Revolution, and to open the eyes of the prejudiced in favour of the houſe of Hanover. The play met with applauſe and with much ſucceſs. Cibber artfully transferred the odium of impoſture from the nonjuring clergyman to the popiſh prieſt.

In ſpite of his affecting to deſpiſe party-men and party principles, Pope in his letters to Jervas and Mr. Digby, diſcovered no little vexation at the ſucceſs of the Non-juror; for that was, with him, a terrible ſymptom of the decay of poetry.

The play is a good imitation of Moliere's Tartuffe; and deſerves commendation, if it were ſo for the ſake only of the fine portrait of an amiable young lady. There is not, in all dramatic poetry, a more ſprightly, good-natured, and generous co-

que-

quet, than Maria; which is admirably acted by Mrs. Abington, under the name of Charlotte, borrowed from the Nonjuror by Bickerſtaffe in his Hypocrite.

Cibber was violently attacked from the prints, chiefly on account of his politics, but pretendedly for his management of the theatre, his behaviour to authors, and for his acting. If we except the remarks on plays and players by the authors of the Tatler and Spectator, the theatrical obſervations, in thoſe days, were coarſe and illiberal, when compared to what we read in our preſent daily and other periodical papers. The prints of our days are generally conducted by men of education and well acquainted with the polite arts. Nor ſhould the actor think himſelf above condeſcending to hearken to their advice and to attend to their reprehenſion, or ſuppoſe himſelf or his art injured by their free examination of his merits.

Sir Joſhua Reynolds, in his excellent notes on Freſnoy, has generouſly admitted that, if the painter was to be informed of the remarks every ſpectator would neceſſarily make on his picture, when expoſed to public view, he would gain conſiderable advantage from them.—This may be applied to acting, *à fortiori*, as every man muſt be a more adequate judge of ſtage-repreſentation than of painting. In every nation in Europe, the productions of art are open to examination. In a free country, like ours, the legiſlators, and the acts of legiſlature itſelf, are not exempt from diſcuſſion. A poem, a picture, a ſtatue, a piece of muſic, the action of a player, are all offered to the public eye, and, from their approbation or cenſure, muſt ſtand or fall. The actor, while he continues to be of value, will be an object of criticiſm. It is, indeed, a teſt

of

of his conſequence; and, when that is withdrawn, he will ſink to nothing. Parties there will be, and prejudices muſt exiſt; but the public is fair in its determination, and will not permit an artiſt of merit to ſuffer by unjuſt remarks or illiberal cenſures.

Dr. Warburton affected to deſpiſe the learning of magazines and reviews. He might, perhaps, receive no addition to his acquirements by peruſing them; but the good people of England, I will preſume to aver, have been much improved, within theſe twenty or thirty years, by that variety of literature and ſcience which has been every where diſſeminated in theſe vehicles; nor do I think all ranks of people could be more innocently or more profitably employed, than in acquiring knowledge ſo readily and with ſuch little expence of time and money.

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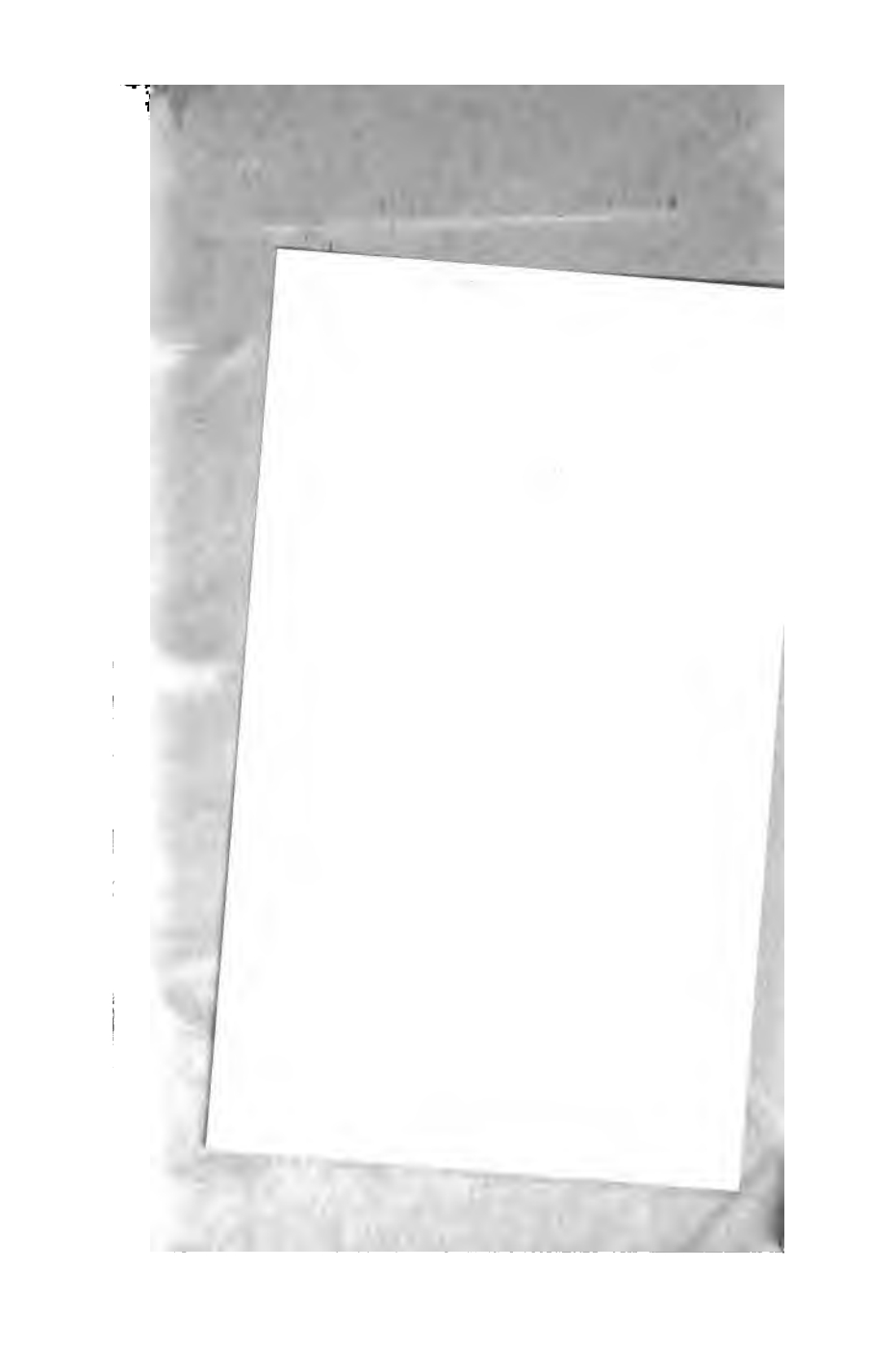
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